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LORD BYRON JUGÉ PAR LES TÉMOINS DE SA VIE.

MY RECOLLECTIONS

OF

LORD BYRON,

&c.

VOLUME I.

OPINIONS OF THE CRITICAL PRESS.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW.

THERE is little reason to doubt of this work having been written by the widow of the Marquis de Boissy, far better known as the COUNTESS GUICCIOLI. There are, we believe, no grounds for thinking the authorship a secret, nor, although there is no direct evidence of the fact, do we think that our supposition will prove unfounded. The readers of it are carried backward and forward, from religion to the world, from mirth to melancholy, from society to solitude, from home scenes to foreign scenes. The authoress is justly indignant at the reiterated attempts made in Byron's lifetime and since, by English and foreign writers,—by some who knew him a little, and by many who did not know him at all, to represent him as an awful and anomalous being, of mystery all compact. If we had been asked, before this work came into our hands,—what we regarded as Byron's capital error throughout life, we should have replied, "affecting to be what he was not;" and this opinion is strengthened by the Marquise de Boissy's account of him. We find in him the seed of many virtues, but the harvest of many vices. At school, he was the generous protector of the weak; in early manhood, and throughout his life, he was deeply attached to his friends; his sympathies with the oppressed of the earth ended only with his days,—and nothing in his life was so creditable or hopeful as were the closing scenes of it at Missolonghi. The chapter of the work which will doubtless attract the most general attention, is that in which Byron's marriage is recorded and commented upon. This, besides the ordinary danger of interfering between man and wife, is obviously a very delicate topic for the noble authoress. The Marchioness de Boissy's volumes are never so agreeable as when Byron himself is called into court to give evidence on points connected with his own life. He may not be an unbiassed witness, but he is a communicative and instructive one. Struck in early days with the interesting and graphic character of Gibbon's journal, he began to keep a diary of his studies, thoughts, and all that he did or heard. Byron, though probably, like Walpole, aware that a letter by him addressed to one would be read by many, is the easier of the two in his language, and from his position in the world at home, and his yet more intimate acquaintance with foreign life and manners, was master of epistolary wealth in a degree far beyond the secluded Cowper. The authoress has wisely allowed Byron to speak for himself in his letters, and the extracts from his correspondence are no less judiciously supported by biographical or characteristic passages from his poems. The junction of his letters and journals with his verse, is auxiliary to a just apprehension of the writer of both. The juxtaposition of so many witnesses has this value; it enables us to collect into one focus the opinions of many, and thus to obtain a tolerably clear view of a not very consistent character. The Marchioness's chapters abound with anecdotes of the extraordinary effect produced by Byron's poetry upon the young and susceptible of both sexes. The scenes he described, the romance with which he clothed his characters, the fervency of his nature-worship, the occasional freedom of his opinions, were lures and charms of irresistible might.

THE ATHENÆUM.

No greater proof could be given of the renewed interest which is being felt with respect to Byron, his life, his character, and his works, than this publication sent forth to gratify the awakened European curiosity. Successive editions of Byron's works—editions for luxurious libraries, and editions even for London boys who have but sixpence to spend, and leisure to read on a London door-step,—prove the hold the poet has taken on the national heart. This production, by Byron's particular friend, the Countess Guiccioli, is the work so long announced and eagerly expected. It is the genuine and authentic work of the celebrated Countess, widow of the Marquis de Boissy. In its pages she once appears in full, in reference to a remark by Byron, that if he could have married the Countess Guiccioli, he might have secured the happiness he had missed in this world, and was never likely to regain. The love passages between Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb are told at some length. He who died at Missolonghi, in 1824, when little more than thirty six years of age, making the usually glad Easter a season of mourning and sorrow to all Greece, may have left—*did*, in fact, leave—an inheritance of some painful memories to his country, but therewith an increase of riches to her literature, which should make of all Englishmen his grateful heirs for ever.

Lord Byron jugé par les témoins de sa Vie.

MY RECOLLECTIONS

OF

LORD BYRON;

AND

THOSE OF EYE-WITNESSES OF HIS LIFE.

"The long promised work of the
COUNTESS GUICCIOLI."—
Athenæum.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO

THE AUTHOR OF THIS WORK,

THE

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

IS

Respectfully Dedicated,

BY

HUBERT E. H. JERNINGHAM.

ADVERTISEMENT

BY THE

ENGLISH PUBLISHER.

THE Publisher of this Translation feels authorized to state, that it is the production of the celebrated COUNTESS GUICCIOLI.

RICHARD BENTLEY.

October, 1868.

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Lord Byron jugé par les Témoins de sa Vie.

MY RECOLLECTIONS, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

"To know another man well, especially if he be a noted and illustrious character, is a great thing not to be despised."—SAINTE-BEUVE.

MANY years ago a celebrated writer, in speaking of Lord Byron, who had then been dead some years, said that so much had already been written upon him that the subject had almost become commonplace, but was far from being exhausted. This truth, indisputable when applied to Byron's genius, his works, and to his intellect, was then and still is equally positive when referring to his moral qualities. A subject as well as an object may become commonplace by the quantity, but nevertheless remain new and rare, owing to its quality. A subject cannot be exhausted before it has been seen under every one of its various aspects, and appreciated in all its points. If much has been said of Lord Byron, has his truly noble character been fairly brought to light? Has he not, on the contrary, been judged rather as the author than the man, and have not the imaginary creations of his powerful mind been too much identified with reality? In the best biographies of his life do we not meet with many gaps which have to be filled up—nay, worse, gaps filled up

with errors which have to be eradicated to make room for the truth? The object of this work is precisely to do away with these errors and to replace them by facts, and to dispel the shadows which fancy has raised around his name. For the old opinions we wish to substitute new appreciations, by weighing exactly the measure of truth which exists in the former; and by the logic of facts we wish to judge fairly so as to prevent posterity from being deceived. In doing this we do not pretend to give England any new information. For a long time, no doubt, error sprang from that country; but years and events have passed since that state of things existed. The liberal and tolerant spirit, enlightened by philosophy, which has spread all over liberal England, has also been reflected in the opinions formed of men, and has modified many pages of biography and history and made Englishmen feel how numerous were the wrongs of which they were guilty towards their illustrious countryman.

It is useless to speak of the national selfishness of England, and pretend that she only appreciates or rewards with her love and esteem such writers as flatter her pride or hide her defects from the eyes of foreigners. This may be true, generally speaking; but Lord Byron's patriotic feelings were of a very different cast. He thought it best to expose to the world at large the faults of his countrymen, in order to correct them. His patriotism was influenced by the superiority of the noble sentiments which actuated his life. Feeling as he did, that he was, above all, a member of the great human community, and declaring it openly; despising popularity, if it cost him the sacrifice of a truth which he deemed it useful and right

to proclaim, and thus going against many of the passions, prejudices, and opinions of his countrymen, Byron certainly wounded many susceptibilities; and could we forget all he had to suffer at the hands of the English, we might almost say he was too severe in his judgments upon them. Notwithstanding, however, it is almost impossible to travel in England without meeting everywhere some token of homage paid to the memory of Byron. Scotland, who looks upon him almost as a son, is proud to show the several houses wherein he lived when a child, and preserves his name and memory with love and respect. To have seen him once, is a recollection of which one is proud. A particular charm encircles the places, mountains, rivers, and bridge of Don, of which he speaks, simply because he has mentioned them in his poems. A letter or anything which has belonged to him is looked upon as a treasure.

At Harrow, the beloved residence of his youth, the growing generation bow with affectionate respect before the pyramid which has been erected to his memory by the love of a former youthful generation. At Cambridge, among all the monuments which recall the glories of the past, Lord Byron's statue commands the rest, and occupies the place of honour. The rooms which he had there are shown and reverenced as places which have harboured genius. In Parliament the same man who formerly, by unjust and unmerited criticisms of the youthful poet, decried his growing genius, and who was guilty of other wrongs against him, has made an act of reparation and of justice by expressing publicly his regret that a grudge of the Dean in Byron's time

had prevailed to prevent a monument being erected in Westminster Abbey to the memory of the poet. The pilgrimage to Newstead is looked upon as an intellectual feast, if not as a duty, by young Englishmen, and his genius is so much revered by them that they do not admit that he is equalled by any contemporary poet or likely to be surpassed by those who follow. No doubt, therefore, England now-a-days only prefers what formerly she used to exact from her poets. Moore's culpable timidities and Macaulay's declamatory exaggerations must, at least, be looked upon as weaknesses of character, which would have been disowned by themselves, had they lived long enough to witness the change in public opinion.

Although full justice has not yet been done to the noble character of the man, still partial justice has been rendered to Byron's memory by the summary dismissal of the numerous false writings which appeared, and which tended to replace the truth by the creations of fancy, and to put into the mouth of the poet the thoughts of their authors and not his own, or to insult him by a magnanimous defence, the honour and glory of which was to redound entirely to the writers. It is necessary to observe, that if Byron was openly calumniated during his lifetime, he was not less so after his death by disguised slander, especially by that kind of absolution which in reality is one of the most odious forms of calumny, since it is the most hypocritical and most difficult to deal with, and least likely to be touched. But England has at last understood the truth and settled all such opinions.

To England, therefore, these pages, which contain the rectification of certain old opinions, will be use-

less. But can the same be said of other countries, and of France especially? Even now-a-days, we read such fanciful appreciation of Byron's character that we could almost believe that the rumours and calumnies which came from England had never been refuted; and that the extraordinary views expressed by Lamartine in beautiful verse are still entertained, and the question still asked, whether Byron was "a devil or an angel?" On reading such appreciations, it seems opportune to present those who admire genius and truth with a very humble but conscientious study of Byron's great mind.

Can it be objected, that the fact of the defence of a foreigner detracts from the interest of the reader? Can a genius be a stranger to man, and does not the earth seem too small to contain such exceptional beings?

Our civilisation, which has almost suppressed every physical barrier that exists between the nations of the earth, has still further annihilated those of the intellect: so much so, that Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, are as much revered in France as in their respective countries, notwithstanding the difference of the idioms in which they have written. The same will occur in respect to Lord Byron, whose name alone opposes every barrier, and against whom the difference of nationality cannot form any obstacle. The language of genius is not of one country only, but appertains to humanity in general: and God Himself has implanted its rules in every heart.

This book is not a regular nor a methodical biography. Nor is it an apology; but rather a study, an analysis, the portrait of a great mind seen under all its aspects, with no other decided intention

on the part of the writer than to tell the truth, and to rest upon indisputable facts and rely upon unimpeachable testimony.

The public now, it is said, cannot bear eulogy, and cares only to know the weak points of great men. We do not believe this to be the case. It would be too severe a criticism of human nature in general, and of our times in particular. In any case, we cannot accept the statement as correct, when applied to noble characters to whom we especially dedicate this work. It may be, the reader will find in our essay beauties which he had not yet observed, which have hitherto been disputed in the original, and which less sympathetic natures than ours might term complacent eulogies; but the fear of being blamed and of being unpopular shall not deter us from our intention of bringing them forth. No criticism can prevent our praising, when he deserves it, the man who never knew the weaknesses of jealousy, and who never failed to bestow eulogy upon every kind of talent without ever claiming any in return. In publishing the book we are, moreover, certain that what to-day may appear praise, to-morrow will be termed justice.

Lord Byron shone at a period when a school called Romantic was in progress of formation. That school wanted a type by which to mould its heroes, as a planet requires a sun to give it light. It took Byron as that type, and adorned him with all the [illegible]ties which pleased its fancy, but the time has [illegible]than arrived when it is necessary that truth [illegible]reveal him in his true light. My book is not [illegible]to dispel every cloud, but a few shades only [illegible]o the lustre and brilliancy of a landscape.

LORD BYRON.

"Others form the man: I tell of him."—MONTAIGNE.

AT all times the world has been very unjust; and (who does not know it?) in the history of nations many an Aristides has paid with exile the price of his virtues and his popularity. Great men, great countries, whole nations, whole centuries, have had to bear up against injustice; and the truth is, that vice has so often taken the place of virtue, evil of good, and error of truth, some have been judged so severely and others so leniently, that, could the book of redress be written, not only would it be too voluminous, but it would also be too painful to peruse. Honest people would feel shame to see the judgments before which many a great mind has had to bend; and how often party spirit, either religious or political, moved by the basest passions—such as hatred, envy, rivalry, vengeance, fanaticism, intolerance, self-love—has been a pretext for disfiguring in the eyes of the public the greatest and noblest characters. It would then be seen how some censor (profiting by the breach which circumstances, or even a slight fault on the part of these great minds, may have made, and joining issue with other inferior judges of character) has often succeeded in throwing a shade on their glorious actions and in casting a slur upon their reputation, like those little insects which from

their number actually succeed, notwithstanding their smallness, in darkening the rays of the sun. What is worse, however, is, that when history has once been erroneously written, and a hero has been put forward in colours which are not real, the public actually becomes accessory to the deception practised upon it: for it becomes so enamoured of the false type which has been held out to its admiration that it will not loosen its hold on it. Public opinion, once fixed, becomes a perfect despotism.

Never, perhaps, has this phenomenon shown itself more visibly and more remarkably than in the case of Lord Byron. Not only was he a victim of these obstinate prejudices, but in his case the annihilation of truth and the creation of an imaginary type have been possible only at the cost of common sense, and notwithstanding the most palpable contradictions. So that he has really proved to be one of the most curious instances of the levity with which human judgments are formed.

We have elsewhere described the various phases of this phenomenon, one of the principal causes of which has been the resolution to identify the poet with the first heroes of his poems. Such a mode of proceeding was as disloyal as it was contrary to all the received rules of literature. It was inspired by hatred and vengeance, adopted by an idle and frivolous public, and the result has proved to be something entirely opposed to the truth.

As long as such a whimsical creation was harmless, it amused Byron himself and his friends; but the day came when it ceased to be harmless without ceasing to be eccentric, and became to Byron a true robe of Nessus.

At his death the truth was demanded of his biographers; but the puppet which had been erected stood there, and amazed the good, whilst it served the malice of the wicked. His genius was analysed, but no conscientious study of his character was made, and Byron, as man, remained an unknown personage.

Yet among his biographers there were men of upright and enlightened minds: they did not all seek to raise themselves at the cost of depreciating him, nor to gain popularity by sparing individuals at the expense of Lord Byron.

If among them many proved to be black sheep, there were several, on the other hand, who were sincere, and even kindly disposed. Yet not one did full justice to Byron, not one defended him as he deserved, not one explained his true character with the conscientious energy which in itself constitutes authority. We shall speak elsewhere of the causes which gave rise to this phenomenon. We shall mention the part which public opinion played in England when suddenly displeased with a poet who dared sound the deepest recesses of the human heart; and who as an artist and a psychologist was interested in watching the growth of every passion, and especially that of love, regardless of the conjugal felicity which that public wished him to respect. It began to fear that its enthusiasm for Lord Byron was a national crime, and by degrees became accessory to the calumnies which were heaped upon his noble character, on account of his supposed want of patriotism, and his refusal to be blind to the defects of the mother-country. We shall see how his biographers, preferring invention to strict adherence to the truth, compounded a Lord Byron such as not to be any

longer recognisable, and to become even—especially in France—a caricature. Of all this we shall speak hereafter. We shall now rather point to the curious than to the unjust character of this fact, and notice the contradictions to which Byron's biographers have lent themselves.

All, or nearly all, have granted to him an infinity of virtues, and naturally fine qualities — such as sensitiveness, generosity, frankness, humility, charity, soberness, greatness of soul, force of wit, manly pride, and nobility of sentiment; but, at the same time, they do not sufficiently clear him of the faults which directly exclude the above-mentioned qualities. The moral man does not sufficiently appear in their writings: they do not sufficiently proclaim his character —one of the finest that was ever allied to a great intellect. Why? Are these virtues such that, like excellent and salutary substances, they become poisoned when placed in contact within the same crucible?

In this refusal to do justice there is contradiction; and as error exists where contradiction lies, it is precisely in that contradiction that we must seek the means of refuting error and assert the power of truth.

Nature always proceeds logically, and the effect is always in direct analogy with its cause. Even in the moral world the precise character of exact sciences must be found. If in a problem we meet with a contradiction, are we not certain that its solution has been badly worked out, and that we must begin it over again to find a true result? The same reasoning holds good for the moral spheres. When a judgment has been wrongly formed, that is, when there appears to be contradiction between various opinions, that judgment must be remodelled, the cause of the error

must be looked for, truth must be separated from falsehood, and regard must be had to the law which obliges us to weigh impartially every assertion, and to discuss equally the ayes and noes. Let this be done for Lord Byron. Let us analyse facts, question the eye-witnesses of his life, and peruse his admirable and simply-written letters, wherein his soul has, so to say, photographed itself. Acts are unquestionably more significative than words; yet if we wish to inquire into his poetry, not by way of appreciating his genius (with which at present we have nothing to do), but the nature of the man, let us do so loyally. Let us not attribute to him the character which he lends to his heroes, nor the customs which he attributes to them, simply because here and there he has given to the one something of his manner, to the other some of his sentiments; or because he has harboured them, in the belief that hospitality can be extended to the wicked without the good suffering from it.

Let us first examine 'Childe Harold,'—the poem which principally contributed to mystify the public, and commenced that despotic type of which we have already spoken.

Childe Harold does not tell his own story. His life is told by a poet. There are, therefore, two well-marked personages on the scene, perfectly distinct and different from one another. The first is the young nobleman in whom Byron intended to personify the precocious perversion of mind and soul of the age, and in general the blaséd existence of the young men of the day, of whom he had met many types at Cambridge, and on his first launch into society. The second is the minstrel who tells his story.

The heart of the former is closed to all joy and to all the finest impulses of the soul; whereas that of the other beats with delight at the prospect of all that is noble, great, good, and just in the world. Why identify the author rather with the one than with the other—with the former rather than with the latter? Why take from him his own sentiments, to give him those of his hero? That hero cannot be called mysterious, since in his preface Byron tells us himself the moral object for which he has selected him. If Childe Harold personifies Lord Byron, who will personify the poet? That poet (and he is no other than Lord Byron) plays a far greater part than the hero. He is much oftener on the scene. In the greater part of the poem the minstrel alone speaks. In the ninety-three stanzas of which the first canto is composed, Harold is on the scene during nineteen stanzas only, while the poet speaks in his own name during the seventy-four other stanzas, displaying a beautiful soul under various aspects, and exhibiting no melancholy other than that inherent to all elevated poetry.

As for the second canto, it opens with a monologue of the minstrel, and Harold is forgotten until the sixteenth stanza. Then only does the melancholy hero appear, to disappear and reappear again for a few moments. But he rather seems to annoy the minstrel, who finishes at the seventy-third stanza by dismissing him altogether; and from that moment to the end of the canto the wretched and unamiable personage does not reappear. To whom, then, belong all the admirable sentiments and all the virtuous aspirations which we read of towards the end of the canto?—to whom, if not to the minstrel himself? that

is, to Lord Byron. What poet has paid so noble a tribute to every virtue? Could that vigour and freshness of mind which breathe upon the lips of the poet, and which well belonged to him, suit the corrupted nature of Harold? If Byron dismisses his hero so often, it is because he experiences towards him the feelings of a logical moralist.

Why then identify Lord Byron with a personage he himself disowns as his prototype, both in his notes, in his preface, in his conversations; and who is proved by facts, by the poem itself, and by the poet's logical and moral reasoning, to be entirely different from his creation? It is true that Byron conceived the unfortunate idea of surrounding his hero by several incidents in his own existence, to place him in the social circle to which he himself belonged, and to give him a mother and a sister, a disappointed love, a Newstead Abbey like his own, and to make him travel where he had travelled, and experience the same adventures.

That is true, and such an act of imprudence can only be explained, by the confidence on which he relied that the identification could never have been thought of. At twenty-one conscience speaks louder than experience. But if we can justify the accusation of his having been imprudent, can we justify his having been calumniated?

Eight years after the publication of the second canto, Byron wrote the third; and here the pilgrim occasionally appears, but so changed that he seems to have been merged into the poet, and to form with him one person only. Childe Harold's sorrows are those of Lord Byron, but there no longer exists any

trace of misanthropy or of satiety. His heart already beats with that of the poet for chaste and devoted affections, for all the most amiable, the most noble, and the most sublime of sentiments. He loves the flowers, the smiling and glorious, the charming and sublime aspect of nature.

> "Yet not insensible to all which here
> Awoke the jocund birds to early song
> In glens which might have made even exile dear;
> Though on his brow were graven lines austere,
> And tranquil sternness, which had ta'en the place
> Of feelings fiercer far but less severe,
> Joy was not always absent from his face,
> But o'er it in such scenes would steal with transient trace."

No longer, then, is satiety depicted upon the pilgrim's brow, but "lines austere;" and the poet seems so desirous of proving to us that Harold is metamorphosed, that when he expresses sentiments full of sympathy, humanity, and goodness, his horror for war and his dislike for the beauties of the Rhine, because—

> "A thousand battles have assail'd thy banks,"

he takes care to add,—

> "Thus Harold inly said" . . . . . .

Harold, then, has ceased to be the weary, *blasé* pilgrim of twenty-one, who in the first canto remains unmoved in presence of the attractions of Florence the beautiful, who inspired the poet with such different sentiments that in the midst even of a storm which threatens to swallow him up he actually finds strength enough to express his sentiments of real lôve for the lovely absent one—of a love, indeed, which is evidently returned. His heart, like the poet's,

now beats with a pure love, and causes him to chant the absence of his friend in the most beautiful strain. Where is the old Harold? It would seem as if the poet, tired of a companion so disagreeable and so opposed to his tastes, and wishing to get rid of him but not knowing how, had first changed and moulded him to his own likeness by giving him his own sentiments, his own great heart, his own pains, his own affections, and, not finding the change natural, had dismissed him altogether. And so it appears, for after the fifty-fifth stanza of the third canto, Childe Harold disappears for ever. Thus at the beginning of the fourth canto, which was published a year after, under the auspices of an Italian sky, the reader finds himself in the presence of the poet only. He meets in him a great and generous soul, but the victim of the most odious and unmerited persecution, who takes his revenge in forgiving the wrongs which are done to him, and who reserves all his energies to consecrate them to the love of that which is loveable, to the admiration of that which calls for it, and who at twenty-nine years of age is imbued with Christian and philosophical qualities, which his wearied hero could never have possessed.

Why then again have identified Byron with Childe Harold? For what reason? It strikes us, that the simplest notions of fairness require us at least to take into account the words of the author himself, and to listen to the protestations of a man who despised unmerited praise more than unjust reproof.

"A fictitious character," says Byron, "is introduced for the sake of giving some connexion to the piece. . . . .

"It had been easy to varnish over his faults, to make him do more and express less, but he never was intended as an example, further than to show that early perversion of mind and morals leads to satiety of past pleasures and disappointment in new ones, and that even the beauties of nature and the stimulus of travel are lost on a soul so constituted, or rather misdirected.

"It has been suggested to me by friends, on whose opinions I set a high value, that in this fictitious character, 'Childe Harold,' I may incur the suspicion of having intended some real personage: this I beg leave once for all to disclaim—Harold is the child of imagination, for the purpose I have stated. In some very trivial particulars, and those merely local, there might be grounds for such a notion: but in the main points, I should hope, none whatever."

Warned by his friends of the danger which there was for him in being identified with his hero, he paused before publishing the poem. He had written it rather by way of recreation than for any other motive; and when Dallas expressed to him his great desire to see the work published, Byron told him how unwilling he was that it should appear in print, and thus wrote to him, after having given way to Dallas' wishes in the matter:—

"I must wish to avoid identifying Childe Harold's character with mine. If in certain passages it is believed that I wished to identify my hero with myself, believe that it is only in certain parts, and even then I shall not allow it. As for the manor of Childe Harold being an old monastic residence, I thought I might better describe what I have seen

than what I invent. I would not for worlds be a man like my hero."

A year after, in writing to Moore on the occasion of dedicating his 'Corsair' to him, after saying that not only had his heroes been criticised, but that he had almost been made responsible for their acts as if they were personal to himself, he adds :—

"Those who know me are undeceived, and those who do not I have little interest in undeceiving. I have no particular desire that any but my acquaintance should think the author better than the beings of his imagining : but I cannot help a little surprise, and perhaps amusement, at some odd critical exceptions in the present instance, when I see several bards in very reputable plight, and quite exempted from all participation in the faults of their heroes, who nevertheless might be found with little more morality than the Giaour; and perhaps—but no—I must admit Childe Harold to be a very repulsive personage, and as to his identity, those who like it must give him whatever *alias* they please."

And in order to embrace the whole of his life in these quotations, we will add what he said at Cephalonia, to Dr. Kennedy, shortly before his death :—

"I cannot conceive why people will always mix up my own character and opinions, with those of the imaginary beings which, as a poet, I have the right and liberty to draw."

"They certainly do not spare your Lordship in that respect," replied Kennedy; "and in 'Childe Harold,' 'Lara,' the 'Giaour,' and 'Don Juan,' they are too much disposed to think that you paint in many instances yourself, and that these characters are

only the vehicles for the expression of your own sentiments and feelings."

"They do me great injustice," he replied, "and what was never before done to any poet. . . . But even in 'Don Juan' I have been misunderstood. I take a vicious and unprincipled character, and lead him through those ranks of society whose high external accomplishments cover and cloak internal and secret vices, and I paint the natural effects of such characters, and certainly they are not so highly coloured as we find them in real life."

"This may be true," said Kennedy, "but the question is, what are your motives and object for painting nothing but scenes of vice and folly?" . . .

"To remove the cloak which the manners and maxims of society," said his Lordship, "throw over their secret sins, and show them to the world as they really are. You have not," added he, "been so much in high and noble life as I have been; but if you had fully entered into it, and seen what was going on, you would have felt convinced that it was time to unmask the specious hypocrisy, and show it in its native colours!"

Kennedy having then remarked that the lower and middling classes of society never entertained the opinion that the highest classes exhibited models of piety and virtue, and were, indeed, disposed to believe them worse than they really were, Byron replied:—

"It is impossible you can believe the higher classes of society worse than they are in England, France, and Italy, for no language can sufficiently paint them."

"But still, my Lord, granting this, how is your book calculated to improve them, and by what right,

and under what title do you too come forward in this undertaking?"

"By the right," he replied, "which every one has who abhors vice united with hypocrisy. My plan is to lead Don Juan through various ranks of society and show that wherever you go vice is to be found."

The doctor then observed, that satire had never done any good, or converted one man from vice to virtue, and that whilst his satires were useless, they would call upon his head the disapproval both of the virtuous and the wicked.

"But it is strange," answered Byron, "that I should be attacked on all sides, not only from magazines and reviews, but also from the pulpit. They preach against me as an advocate of infidelity and immorality, and I have missed my mark sadly in having succeeded in pleasing nobody. That those whose vices I depicted and unmasked should cry out is natural, but that the friends of religion should do so is surprising: for you know," said he, smiling, "that I am assisting you in my own way as a poet, by endeavouring to convince people of their depravity; for it is a doctrine of yours—is it not?—that the human heart is corrupted; and therefore if I show that it is so in those ranks which assume the external marks of politeness and benevolence,—having had the best opportunities, and better than most poets, of observing it,—am I not doing an essential service to your cause, by first convincing them of their sins, and thus enabling you to throw in your doctrine with more effect?"

"All this is true," said Kennedy; "but you have not shown them what to do, however much you may

have shown them what they are. You are like the surgeon who tears the bandages from the numerous wounds of his ulcerated patients, and, instead of giving fresh remedies, you expose them to the air and disgust of every bystander, who, laughing, exclaims, 'How filthy these fellows are!'"

"But I shall not be so bad as that," said Lord Byron; "*you shall see what a winding up I shall give to the story.*"

The end was to justify and give a moral to everything. Whilst reproving, however, this system of identification, which not only leads to error but also to calumny, can it, however, be denied that there was not some reason, if not to justify it, at least to explain it? To deny that there is, would, we think, be to commit another error. The nature of Lord Byron's genius, the circumstances of his life, the innate qualities of his heart and soul, were unquestionably aids to his detractors.

Upon the measure of the relations which existed between reality and fiction in his poems, and especially as applied to his own history, here are the words of Moore:—

"As the mathematician of old required but a spot to stand upon, to be able, as he boasted, to move the world, so a certain degree of foundation in fact seemed necessary to Byron, before that lever which he knew how to apply to the world of the passions could be wielded by him. So small, however, was, in many instances, the connexion with reality which satisfied him, that to aim at tracing through his stories these links with his own fate and fortunes, which were after all, perhaps, visible but to his own

fancy, would be a task as uncertain as unsafe; and this remark applies not only to the 'Bride of Abydos,' but to the 'Corsair,' 'Lara,' and all the other beautiful fictions that followed, in which, though the emotions expressed by the poet may be in general regarded as vivid recollections of what had at different times agitated his own bosom, there are but little grounds, however he might himself occasionally encourage such a supposition, for connecting him personally with the groundwork or incidents of the stories."

To analyse the analogies and differences which existed between the personal character of Byron and that of the poet would form a very curious psychological study. It would be even an act of justice towards his memory, but one which would prove too long, and would ill suit these pages. Let us merely declare, that both analogies and differences have existed, and that if the same cannot be said of him as has been said of men of less renown, "the poet is different from the man," it must be allowed that in Byron the two characters were associated without being coupled. This association did not exist between himself and the creatures of his fancy, but merely with the principal features of his poetry, their energy and sensitiveness. As to certain analogies between his heroes, or between them and himself, when they really exist, they should be pointed out; the duty of criticism being to discern and to point to the nature and limits of those analogies.

When Byron began his travels, his genius ever sought an outlet. Too young to have as yet much experience, he had only made known what were his tendencies.

The education of his genius began in his childhood, on the romantic banks of the Dee and on the shores of the ocean; in the midst of the Scottish firs, in the house of his mother, which was peopled with relics of the past; and at Newstead Abbey, situated in the heart of the romantic forest of Sherwood, which is surrounded by the ruins of the great Norman abbeys, and teems with traditional recollections of Robin Hood. The character of that sympathetic chief of the outlaws, who was a nobleman by birth, and who was always followed by the lovely Marian, dressed up as a page; his generosity, his courage, his cleverness, his mixture of virtue and vice, his pride, his buoyant and chivalrous nature, his death even, which was so touching, must, to our mind, have produced a powerful impression upon one who, like Byron, was gifted with as much heart as imagination. At least the poet's fancy, if not the acts of the man himself, must have been influenced by these early impressions; and, no doubt, Conrad, and other heroes of his early poems, must have sprung from the poet's recollections of the legendary stories in the midst of which he had been nursed. In any case, however, the impressions which he had received did not affect his nature.

He had, notwithstanding his youthful years, been able to show the measure, not the tendency of his genius, as well as his aversion for all that is artificial, superficial, insipid, and effeminate; and he had proved that the two great characteristics of his nature were energy and sensitiveness.

An education thus begun was to be continued and matured during his first voyage among scenes the

most poetical and romantic in the world; in the glorious East, where there exists a perpetual contrast between the passionate nature of man and the soft hue of the heavens under the canopy of which he lives.

The manners, character, ideas, and singular passions of those races, which civilisation has not yet tamed down; their energy, which often betrays itself in the perpetration of the greatest crimes, and as frequently in the practice of the finest qualities; and the life which Byron was forced to lead among them, all produced a great impression upon his mind, and became precious materials to help the development of his intellect. In the same way that, as it has been said, Salvator Rosa's encounters with bandits contributed to the development of his talent, so did the adventures of Lord Byron during this first journey contribute to form his particular taste. Had he always remained in the midst of extremely civilised nations, in which poetry and the great passions are lost, and the heart too often becomes cold, his mind might have developed itself in a less brilliant and original manner.

It was this extraordinary union of energy and sensitiveness in Byron which was to determine the choice of subjects. No doubt the desire to produce an effect had a part in the selection, especially at the dawn of his genius; and this would seem evident in the picture of satiated pleasure as represented by Childe Harold, and in the strange nature of Manfred. But this is only a portion of the reality. His principal qualities were the real arbiters in the selection of subjects which he made. God has not given to

us all the same voice. The largest trees—the oaks—require the help of storms to make their voices heard, whilst the reed only needs the help of the summer breeze.

Byron's attention was ever directed to what was uncommon, either in nature or in the human heart; either in good or in evil, either in the ordinary course of things or beyond its limits. To the study of placid nature he preferred that of that soul which, though less well regulated, yet rises superior to fortune by its energy and will.

The spark which lit up his genius could not live in that goodness which constituted the groundwork of his nature, but in passion, called forth by the sight of great misfortunes, great faults, great crimes, in fact, by the sight of all which attracted or repelled him, which was most in harmony with his energetic character, or at greatest variance with his sensitive nature. One of the motives which actuated his mind was sympathy—the other, antipathy; which exercised over him the same kind of fascination which the bird feels whom the serpent's glance has fascinated, or like the unaccountable impulse which causes a man to throw himself down the precipice on the verge of which he stands.

The various aspects of nature exercised a similar influence over him. With his exquisite sense of their beauties, Byron no doubt often described the enchanting climates in the midst of which he placed the action of his poems; but his pen had always a manly action, with a mixture of grace and vigour in it quite inimitable. His descriptions, however, always appeared to be secondary objects in his mind, and

rather constituted the frames which encircled the man whom he wished to depict.

One would say that the soft beauties of a landscape and the playful zephyrs which caress the crests of little waves were too effeminate subjects for him to dwell upon. His preferences evidently point to the savage side of nature, to the struggles between physical forces, to the sublimities of the tempest, and almost, I would say, to a certain disorganisation of nature; provided, of course, all is restored to order the moment such a disorganisation threatens the existence of beauty in art or in the moral world.

At that time, what Byron could not find in his real and historical subject, he took from another reality, which was himself,—that is, his own qualities, the circumstances of his life, his tastes; without ever inquiring whether Conrad's fear at the sight of the mysterious drop of blood on Gulnare's forehead was that of Byron, whether the Venetian renegade Alp could really experience the horror which Byron did at Constantinople at the sight of dogs feasting upon human carcases; or whether the association of the qualities with which he idealised his heroes would not induce psychologists to accuse him of sinning against truth, of destroying the unity of a Corsair's nature.

In this Lord Byron confided in his powers. He felt that the love of truth, and of what is beautiful, was too strong in him ever to depart from or cause him to violate the essential rules of art; but he wished to remain a poet whilst trusting in reality.

When he went to the East, and found himself there in contact with outward circumstances so in

harmony with the natural bent of his views, and in presence of men like Ali Pasha, of whose victims he could almost hear the moans and the screams "in the clime"

> "Where all save the spirit of man is divine;
> Where wild as the accents of lovers' farewell
> Are the hearts which they bear and the tales which they tell,"

he felt that he was at last in the land most likely to fire his natural genius, and to permit of his satisfying the imperious want which his observing mind constantly experienced of resting upon reality and upon truth. The terrible Ali Pasha of Yanina was especially the type which attracted his notice. "Ali Pasha," says Galt, "is at the bottom of all his Oriental heroes. His 'Corsair' is almost the history of Ali Pasha."

In the 'Bride of Abydos' the old Giaffir is again Ali. As for 'Lara,' it is thought that Byron conceived him on being very strongly impressed by the sight of a nobleman who was accused of murder, and who was pointed out to him at the Cagliari theatre. "I always thought," says Galt, who was present on the occasion, "that this incident had a share in the conception of 'Lara,' so small are the germs which fructify genius." The 'Giaour' is due to a personal adventure of Byron's, in which he played, as was his wont, a most energetic and generous part. The origin of 'Manfred' lies in the midst of sublime Alpine scenery, where, on a rock, Byron discovered an inscription bearing the names of two brothers, one of whom had murdered the other at that spot. The history of Venice inspired him with Alp the renegade, who, disgusted with the unjust

severities of his countrymen, turned Mahomedan and swore vengeance against the land of his birth.

It is, however, indispensable to remark, that in each of these characters there are two distinct realities. The one tries, by a display of too much energy, to overstep the limits of the natural; the other brings the subject back to its true proportions by idealizing it. The first is the result of the poet's observations of men and their customs, or of his study of history; the other, by the impossibility which he knows to exist in him of departing from the rules of art by pushing reality to the point of making of it a positive suffering. In the first case his heroes are like one another by their analogy in the use and abuse of strength; in the other they are like Byron, because he has almost instilled a portion of his own life into them, in order to idealize them.

Conrad is the real pirate of the Ægean sea: independent, haughty, terrible in battle, full of energy and daring such as becomes the chief of corsairs, and such as Byron's study of the country where the action lies pointed out to him that such a man should be placed. But the poet describes himself when he makes Conrad, at the risk of his own life, save women from a harem, or shudder at the sight of a drop of blood on the brow of a lovely maiden. The spot on Gulnare's forehead, whilst causing him to suspect some crime, banishes all her charms in his eyes, and inspires him with the greater horror from the fact that the love which she had sworn him probably inspired her with the foul act, to save his life and restore him to liberty. He accuses himself with having been the involuntary cause of it, and feels

that his gratitude will be a torture; his former love for Gulnare an impossibility. We find Byron's own nature again in the ascetic rule of life to which Conrad has subjected himself, and in his passionate and ideal tenderness for Medora, whose love, in his eyes, surpasses all the happiness of this world, and whose death plunges him into irretrievable despair.

In the 'Siege of Corinth,' Alp is the real type of the historical Venetian renegade, who is incapable of forgiveness, and who makes use of all his energies to gratify his revenge. But he represents Byron when he speaks of the impressions which he felt under the starry canopy of heaven the night before the battle, when his imagination, taking him back to the happy, innocent days of his childhood, he contrasts them with the present, which for him is one of remorse, and when there glimmer still in his soul faint lights of humanity, which make him turn away from the horrible sight of dogs devouring the dead bodies of men.

Byron speaks in his own person in the introduction to the 'Giaour,' which is replete with most exquisite beauty. In it he opens to the reader unexplored fields of delight, leads him through delicious countries where all is joy for the senses, where all recollections are a feast for the soul, and where his love of moral beauty is as strongly marked in his praise of olden Greece, as is his condemnation of modern degraded Greece. Byron speaks again in his own name when he puts invectives in the mouth of the Mussulman fisherman, and makes him curse so strongly

the crime of the Giaour and the criminal himself, whose despair is the expiation of his crimes and the beautiful triumph of morality.

In the 'Bride of Abydos' (where the terrible Ali again comes forward in the shape of the old Giaffir) the amiable and unfortunate Selim and the poet share the real sentiments of Byron. Byron is also himself when he adorns his heroine with every grace and perfection of body and soul, and also whenever it is necessary to idealize in order that a too rigorous imitation of reality may not offend either the laws of art or the feelings of the reader. As for 'Don Juan,' it is only fair to say that he in a measure deserved the persecution which it brought upon him. Yet, if we judge the poem with no pre-conceived severity, we shall find that, with the exception of certain passages where he went beyond the limits prescribed to satire, from his hatred of hypocrisy, and also at times as a revenge against his persecutors, the poem is charming. These passages he intended to suppress,* but death prevented him. This is greatly to be regretted, for otherwise 'Don Juan' would have been the most charming satirical poem in existence, and especially had not the last four cantos, written in Greece, been destroyed. The scene lay in England, and the views expressed in them explained many things which can never now be known. In allowing such an act to be committed for the sake of sparing the feelings of some influential persons and

* He often told and promised his friends at Genoa that he would alter the passages which are unjust and reprehensible, and that, before it was finished, 'Don Juan' would become a chaste and irreproachable satire.

national susceptibilities, Byron's friends failed in their duty to his memory, for the last four cantos gave the key to the previous ones, and justified them. From the moment Byron conceived 'Don Juan' he steeled his heart against feeling; and he kept to his resolution not to give way to his natural goodness of disposition, wishing the poem to be a satire as well as an act of revenge. Here and there, however, his great soul pierces through, and shows itself in such a true light that Byron's portrait could be better drawn from passages of 'Don Juan,' than from any other of his poems.* We have sufficiently proved,

* "His manner was perhaps the more seductive,
Because he ne'er seemed anxious to seduce;
Nothing affected, studied, or constructive
Of coxcombry or conquest: no abuse
Of his attractions marr'd the fair perspective,
To indicate a Cupidon broke loose,
And seem to say, 'Resist us if you can'—
Which makes a dandy while it spoils a man.

XIII.

"Don Juan was without it;
In fact, his manner was his own alone:
Sincere he was———

XIV.

"By nature soft, his whole address held off
Suspicion: though not timid, his regard
Was such as rather seem'd to keep aloof,
To shield himself than put you on your guard.

XV.

"Serene, accomplish'd, cheerful, but not loud,
Insinuating without insinuation;
Observant of the foibles of the crowd,
Yet ne'er betraying this in conversation;
Proud with the proud, yet courteously proud,
So as to make them feel he knew his station
And theirs:—without a struggle for priority
He neither brook'd nor claim'd superiority.

we think, that the uniform character of Byron's heroes, which has been blamed by the poet's enemies, was merely the reflection of the moral beauty which he drew from himself. It might almost be said that the qualities with which he had been gifted by Heaven conspired against him.

We have been led to dwell upon this phase of his literary career, at the risk even of tiring the patience of the reader, from the necessity which we believe exists to destroy the phantom of identification which has been invoked, and to explain the moral nature of Byron in its true light before analysing the poet under other aspects. It is not in 'Harold' or in 'Conrad,' nor in any of his Oriental poems, that we are likely to trace the moral character of Byron, for, although it would be easy to detach the author's sentiments from those of the personages of these poems, yet they might offer a pretext of blame to those who hate to look into a subject to discover the truth which does not appear at first sight. Nor is it in 'Manfred' —the only one of his poems wherein, perhaps, reason may be said to be at fault, owing to the sickness under which his soul laboured at the time when it was written, and to his diseased imagination, produced by solitude and unmerited grief. In his lyrical poems Byron's soul must be sought. There he speaks and sings in his own name, expresses his own sentiments,

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XVI.

"That is, with men: with women he was what
They pleased to make or take him for."—*Canto* XV.

LIV.

"There was the purest Platonism at bottom
Of all his feelings."—*Canto* X.

breathes his own thoughts; or, again, in his elegies and in his miscellaneous poems, in his dramas, in his mysteries, nay, even in his satires—the noble and courageous independence of which has never been surpassed by any satirist, ancient or modern—and generally in all the poems which he wrote in Italy, and which might almost be called his second form. In these poems no medium is any longer required between his soul and that of the reader. It is not possible any longer to make any mistake about him in these. The melancholy and the energy displayed in them cannot serve any more to give him the mask of a Conrad, or of a Harold, or of a misanthrope, or of a haughty individual, but they place in relief what there is of tender, amiable, affectionate sublime in those chosen beings whom God occasionally sends upon earth to testify here below of the things above:—

"Per far di colassu fede fra noi."—PETRARCH.

Thus, in his elegy upon the death of Thyrza, "far too beautiful," says Moore, "and too pure to have been inspired by a mortal being," what pathos, what sensitiveness! What charm in his sonnets to Guinevre! What soft melancholy, what profound and intimate knowledge of the immortality and spirituality of our soul, in his Hebrew melodies! "They seem as though they had been inspired by Isaiah and written by Shakespeare," says the Very Rev. Dr. Stanley, Dean of Westminster. What touching family affection in his domestic poems, and what generosity in the avowal of certain wrongs! What great and moral feeling pervade the two last cantos of 'Childe Harold,' melancholy though they

be, like all things which are beautiful! How one feels that the pain they tell of has its origin in unmerited persecution, and how his intellect came to his aid, and enabled him to bear with calmness the uncertainties incident to our nature! What greatness of soul in the forgiveness of what to others would seem unpardonable! What love of humanity and of its rights! What hatred of injustice, tyranny, and oppression in the 'Ode to Venice,' in 'The Lament of Tasso,' in 'The Prophecy of Dante,' and in general in all his latter poems, even in the 'Isle,' a poem little known, which was written a short time before he left Genoa for Greece. Here, more than in any other of his poems, we see the admirable peace of mind which he had created for himself, and how far too high his great intellect soared to be any longer moved by the world's injustice.

Quotations from his poems would be impossible. How choose without regretting what has been discarded? They must be read; and those must be pitied who do not feel morally better after having read them.

This is precisely what has been least done up to the present time: people have been content with reading his early poems, and with seeking Byron in 'Childe Harold' or in the heroes of his Oriental poems; which is about as just as to look for Shakespeare in Iago, Milton in Satan, Goëthe in Mephistopheles, or Lamartine in the blasphemies of his ninth Meditation.

Thus French critics,—disposed to identify the man with the imaginary beings of his poems, and neglecting to seek him where they could have found him,

relying upon judgments formed in England, and too often by people prejudiced against Byron,—have themselves adopted false views with respect to the author and his works. Thus, again, poetry—which without any preconceived teaching or any particular doctrine of its own, without transgressing the rules laid down by art, moved the soul, purified and elevated it, and taught it to despise the base and cowardly desires of nature, and excited in it the admiration of all that is noble and heroic,—was declared to be suspicious even in France, because too often it had proclaimed openly the truth where one would have wished truth to have been disguised. Many would fain have thought otherwise, but they preferred remaining silent, and to draw from that poetry the poetical riches of which they might be in want.

Our intention being to consecrate a chapter to the examination of the moral tendency of Byron's poetry, we will not now say more. We must add, however, that these views which had been so easily adopted in France were not those of the majority of right-thinking persons in England, although they dared not proclaim their opinions then as they can now.

I shall only quote the opinion of two Englishmen of great merit (Moore and Sir Egerton Brydges), who can neither one nor the other be suspected of partiality; the first, on account of his great fear of ever wounding the susceptibilities of his countrymen, the other by the independence and nobility of his character.

"How few are the pages in his poems," says Moore, "even if perused rapidly, which by their natural tendency towards virtue, or some splendid tribute to

the greatness of God's works, or by an explosion of natural piety more touching than any homily, do not entitle him to be admitted in the purest temple of which Christianity may have the keep!"—*Moore*, vol. ii.

Sir Egerton Brydges, after having fully appreciated the poems of Lord Byron, says:—

"They give to the reader's best instincts an impulse which elevates, purifies, instructs, charms, and affords us the noblest and purest of joys."—*Sir E. Brydges*, vol. x. p. 141.

These quotations perhaps will be found too many, but are they not necessary? Is truth which can be so easily changed equally easy to re-establish? Are not a thousand words wanted to restore a reputation which a light word or, may be, slight malice has tarnished? If the author of these pages only expressed individual opinions without adducing any proof, that is to say, without accompanying them with the disinterested and enlightened testimonies of people who have known Byron personally, these volumes might gain in interest by being condensed in a shorter space.

But in shortening the road would the author attain the desired end? would the self-imposed task be fulfilled? would his or her own convictions become those of others? Should not authors sacrifice themselves to their subject in all works inspired by a devoted spirit? Shall it be said that oftentimes one has wished to prove what had already been conceded by everybody? that the value of the proofs adduced is lessened by the fact that they are nearly all already known? In answer, and without noticing the words "nearly all," he might say that, as truth has several

aspects, one may almost, without mentioning new facts, arrive at being what might be called the guide in the tour round the soul, and fathom its depth in search of the reality; just as when we have looked at all the sides of a picture, we return to it, in order to find in it fresh beauties which may have escaped our notice on a first inspection. There are certain souls, to fathom which it is absolutely necessary to employ a retrospective method; in the same way that the pictures, for instance, of Salvator Rosa enchant on close inspection of the great beauties which in some lights seem hid by a mass of clouds.

"One can hardly employ too many means," says Ste. Beuve, "to know a man; that is, to understand him to be something more than an intellectual being. As long as we have not asked ourselves a certain number of questions about such and such an author, and as long as they have not been satisfactorily answered, we are not sure of having completely made him out, even were such questions to be wholly irrelevant to the subjects upon which he has written.

"What did he think upon religious matters?

"How did the aspect of nature affect him?

"How did he behave in regard to women?

"How about money?

"What rules did he follow?

"What was his daily life? &c., &c.

"Finally, what was his peculiar vice and foible? Every man has one.

"Not one of these questions is unimportant in order to appreciate an author or his book, provided the book does not treat of pure mathematics; and especially if it is a literary work, that is to say,

a book wherein there is something about everything." *

Be this opinion of an eminent critic our rule and an encouragement to our efforts.

We are well aware that in France, now-a-days, writers do not like to use the same materials in describing a character as are used by other nations, and especially by England. A study of this kind in France must not be a judgment pronounced upon the individual who is the object of it, and still less an inquiry. The qualities and defects of a man of genius do not constitute the principal business of the artist. Man is now rather examined as a work of art or as an object of science. When reason has made him out, and intellectual curiosity has been satisfied, the wish to understand him is not carried out further. The subject is abandoned, lest the reader may be tired.

This may be good reasoning in many cases; but in the present perhaps the best rule is "in medio tutissimus." When a good painting is spoilt by overpolish, to wash the polish off is not to restore it to its former appearance. To arrive at this last result, however, no pains should be spared; and upon this principle we must act with regard to Byron. In psychological studies the whole depends upon all the parts, and what may at first seem unimportant may prove to be the best confirmation of the thesis. To be stopped by details (I might almost say repetitions) would therefore be to exhibit a fear in adducing proof.

Can it be said that we have not sufficiently condemned? To add this interest to the volume would not have been a difficult task.

* Ste. Beuve, 'Nouveaux Lundis,' vol. iii., p. 28.

To attack is easier than to defend: but we should then have had to invent our facts, and, at the same time, to add romance to history.

The world, says a great moralist of our times, prefers a vice which amuses it rather than a virtue which bores it; but our respect for the reader convinces us that the adoption of such a means of arriving at success would forfeit their respect for us and be as repugnant to their sense of justice as to our own. As regards Byron, the means has more than once been employed, and with the more success by those who have united to their skill the charms of style.

But in claiming no talent, no power to interest, and in refusing to appear as an author from motives of pusillanimity, idleness, or self-love, is one less excusable for hiding the truth when one is acquainted with it?

If it is the duty of a man of honour and a Christian to come to the rescue of a victim to violence when it is in one's power, is it not incumbent upon one to raise a voice in the defence of those who can no longer resent an insult, when we know that they are wrongly accused? To be silent under such circumstances would be productive of remorse; and the remorse is greater when felt on the score of those whose genius constitutes the monopoly of the whole world, and forms part of the common treasure of humanity, which enjoins that it should be respected.

Is not their reputation a part of the inherited treasure? To allow such reputation to be outraged would, in our minds, be as culpable as to hide a portion of a treasure which is not our own.

"Truth," says Lamartine, "does not require style.

Its light shines of itself; its appearance is its proof."

In publishing these pages, written conscientiously and scrupulously, we confide in the opinion expressed above in the magic language of the man who can create any prestige. If the reader finds these guarantees of truth sufficient, and deigns to accept our conscientious remarks with indulgence and kindness; if, after examining Byron's character under all its aspects, after repeating his words, recalling his acts, and speaking of his life—especially of that which he led in Italy—and mentioning the various impressions which he produced upon those who knew him personally, we are justified in the reader's opinion in having endeavoured to clear the reality from all the clouds which imagination has gathered round the person of Byron, and in trying to earn for his memory a little sympathy by proclaiming the truth, in place of the antipathy which falsehood has hitherto obtained for him, our object will have been attained.

To endeavour to restore Byron's reputation is the more necessary, since Moore himself, who is his best biographer, failed not only in his duty as a friend, but as the historian of the poet's life: for he knew the truth, and dared not proclaim it. Who, for instance, could better inform us of the cause which led to Byron's separation from his wife? And yet Moore chose to keep the matter secret.

Who was better acquainted with the conduct of Byron's colleagues at the time of his conjugal differences—with the curious proposals which were made to him by them to recover their good graces—with his refusal to regain them at such a cost—with the

persecution to which he was, after that, subjected—with the names of the people who instigated a popular demonstration against him—with all the bad treatment which obliged him to quit England? And yet has Moore spoken of it?*

Who, better than Moore, could tell of the friends on whom Byron relied, and who at the time of his divorce sided with Lady Byron, and even went so far as to aggravate the case by falsely publishing reports of his having ill-treated Lady Byron and discharged loaded guns in order to frighten her?

Who was better acquainted with the fact that the last cantos of 'Don Juan,' written in Greece, had been destroyed in England, and that the journal which he kept after his departure from Genoa had been destroyed in Greece? Moore knew it very well, and did not reveal these facts, lest he should create enemies

* When the persecution to which Lord Byron was exposed by his separation had attained its greatest height, an influential person—not belonging to the peerage—came to visit him, and told him that, if he wished to see how far the folly of men went, he had only to give orders for having it shown that nothing said against him was true, but that then he must change politics and come over to the Tory party. Lord Byron replied that he would prefer death and all kinds of tortures to such meanness. Hereupon the person in question said that he must suffer the consequences, which would be heavy, since his colleagues were determined on his ruin, out of party spirit and political hatred. It was at this time that, going one day to the House, he was insulted by the populace, and even treated in it like an outlaw. No one spoke to him, nor approached to give any explanation of such a proceeding, except Lord Holland, who was always kind to him, and indeed to every one else. Others—such as the Duke of Sussex, Lord Minto, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Grey—would fain have acted in a like manner; but they suffered themselves to be influenced by his enemies, amongst whom more than one was animated by personal rancour because the young lord had laughed at them and shown up their incapacity.

Lord Byron, finding himself received in this way by his colleagues, pretended not to see it, and after a few moments quitted the House, never more to set foot within it.

for himself. He actually went so far as to pretend that Byron never wrote anything in Greece.*

Who better than Moore knew that Byron was not irreligious?—And yet he pretended that he was. And finally, Who was better aware that Byron's greatest aim was to be useful to humanity, and yet encouraged the belief that Byron's expedition to Greece was purely to satisfy the desire that people should speak of him as a superior man? In a few words, Moore has not made the best of Byron's qualities, has kept silence over many things which might have enhanced his character in public opinion; and wished, above all, to show the greatness of his poetical genius, which was never questioned. One would almost say that Moore did not like Byron to be too well spoken of:

* Lord Byron's mind, incapable of idleness, was constantly at work, even despite himself and amidst pressing active occupations. During his stay in the Ionian Islands, at Missolonghi, he wrote five cantos of Don Juan. The scene of the cantos that followed was laid first in England and then in Greece. The places chosen for the action naturally rendered these last cantos the most interesting, and, besides, they explained a host of things quite justifying them. They were taken to England with Lord Byron's other papers; but there they were probably considered not sufficiently respectful towards England, on which they formed a sort of satire too outspoken with regard to living personages, and doubtless it was deemed an act of patriotism to destroy them. And so the world was deprived of them.

Lord Byron had also kept a journal since the day of his departure from Genoa up to the time when illness made the pen drop from his hand. To it he had consigned his most intimate thoughts; and we may well imagine how full of interest it must have been, written amid all the emotions agitating his soul at that time. This journal was found amongst his papers by a personage of high standing in Greece, who was the first to inspect them, and who, seeing his own name and conduct mentioned in no flattering terms, destroyed them in order to hide from England the unvarnished truth told of himself. Count Gamba often speaks of this journal in the letters addressed at this period to his sister.

We leave the reader to make his own comments on these too regrettable facts.

for whenever he praises, he ever accompanies the praise with a blame, a "but" or an "if"; and instead of openly contradicting accusations which he knew to be false, and honestly proclaiming the truth, he, too, preferred to excuse the poet's supposed shortcomings. Moore was wanting in courage. He was good, amiable, and clever; but weak, poor, and a lover of rank,—where, naturally, he met with many political enemies of Byron. He, therefore, dared not then tell the truth, having too many interests to consider. Hence his concessions and his sluggishness in leaving the facts as they were; and in many cases, when it was a question between the departed Byron and one of his high detractors, the one sacrificed was the dead friend who could no longer defend himself. All such considerations for the living were wrongs towards the memory of Byron.

The gravest accusation, however, to which Moore is open is, that he did not preserve the Memoirs which Byron gave him on the sworn condition that nothing should prevent their publication. The promise thus given had restored peace to Byron's mind, so confident was he that it would be fulfilled. To have broken his word is a crime for which posterity will never forgive Moore. Can it be alleged, by way of excuse, that he gave extracts from it? But besides the authenticity of the extracts, which might be questioned, of what value can be a composition like Moore's in presence of Byron's very words? No one can pretend to be identified with such a mind as Byron's in the expression of his own feelings; and, least of all, a character like Moore's.

'Memoirs,' then, which were the justification

of Byron's life; the last cantos, which were the justification of the poet and of the man; the journal, which showed his prudence and sagacity beyond his age, which by the simple relation of facts proved how he had got rid of all the imperfections of youth, and at last become the follower of wisdom, so much so that he would have been one of the most virtuous men in England,—all have been lost to the world: they have descended with him into the tomb, and thus made room for the malice of his detractors. Hence the duty of not remaining silent on the subject of this highly-gifted man.

In restoring, however, facts to their true light, we do not pretend to make Byron appear always superior to humanity in his conduct as a man and a poet. Could he, with so sensitive and passionate a nature as his was, and living only that period when passions are strongest, have always acted as those who from age no longer are affected by them? If it is easy not to give way to our passions at seventy, is it equally so at twenty or at thirty?

Persecuted as he was, could Byron be expected to remain unmoved? If his passion for truth made him inexorable in some of his poems; if his passion for justice allowed his pen at times to go beyond the limits which it should have respected; if even at times he was unjust, because he had been too much injured and irritated,—he undoubtedly would have compensated for his involuntary and slight offences, had he not been carried off so early.

As for the imperfection of these pages,—once we have dissipated error, and caused truth to be definitively received as regards Byron,—an abler pen can

easily correct it, and do away with the numberless repetitions with which we are aware we shall be reproached. We could not do otherwise, as we wished to multiply proofs. Others, some day, will achieve what we have been unable to perform.

Our work is like the stream which falls from the mountain and is filled with ooze: its only merit is to swell the river into which it runs. But, sooner or later, a stronger current will purify it, and give clearness and brilliancy to it, without taking from it the merit of having increased the bulk of the waters.

Such as it is, we dedicate this humble work to the noble souls who worship truth. They will feel that we have been able to place them in a more intimate connexion with another great mind, and thus we shall have gained our reward.

CHAPTER I.

LORD BYRON AND M. DE LAMARTINE.

To Count de ———.

MY DEAR COUNT, Paris, 17th June, 1860.

Confiding in your willingness to oblige, I beg to ask a favour and your advice. I received, a short time ago, a prospectus of a subscription to be raised for a general edition of the works of M. de Lamartine. You are aware that when it is a question of showing my sympathy for M. de Lamartine I would never miss the opportunity of doing so; but on this occasion I see on the programme the promise of a Life of Lord Byron. Such an announcement must alarm the friends of that great man; for they remember too vividly the sixteenth number of the 'Cours Littéraire' to subscribe hastily to a work when they have not more information than is therein given. You, who forget nothing, must probably remember the strange judgment of Byron formed by M. de Lamartine in that article. Identifying the man with the poet, and associating his great name with that of Heine on account of some rather hazardous lines in 'Don Juan,' and forgetting the license allowed to such poetry—an imitation of the Italian poets Berni, Ariosto, Pulci, Buratti—M. de Lamartine did not forget a few personal attacks upon himself, and called Byron the

founder of the school for promoting satanic laughter, whilst he heaped upon him the most monstrous accusations. M. de Lamartine ventured to say of Byron things which even his greatest enemies never dared to utter at that time when in England it was the custom to revile him. Although the time has not yet come when Lord Byron's Life should be written, since the true sources of collecting information respecting him are unattainable so long as the people live to whom his letters were addressed, still it is easy to perceive that the time has at length arrived when in England the desire to do him justice and fairly to examine his merits is felt by the nation generally. Moore, Parry, Medwin, &c., have already attempted to make known the character of the man as distinct from that of the poet. They no longer sought to find in him a resemblance with Childe Harold, or the Corsair, or Manfred, or Don Juan, nor to judge of him by the conversations in which he sought to mystify those with whom he conversed; but they judged him by his acts and by his correspondence.

If so happy a reaction, however, is visible in England the same cannot be said of France, where there being no time to read what is published elsewhere, an error is too soon embraced and engrafted on the mind of the public as a consequence of a certain method which dispenses with all research. Hence the imaginary creation which has been called Byron, and which has been maintained in France notwithstanding its being wholly unacceptable as [illegible]rtrait of the man, and totally different from the [illegible]n known personally to some happy few who had [illegible]easure of beholding in him the handsomest, the

most amiable of men, and the greatest genius whom God has created.

But M. de Lamartine, who wishes particularly to show the character of the man, instead of adding to the numerous proofs of courage and grandeur of mind which he has personally shown to the world—that of confessing that he has erred in his judgment of Byron—endeavours to study him only in his works. But in doing this, and even though a moral object may be found in each of Byron's works, it strikes us that M. de Lamartine would have done better to pursue this line in the analysis of the intellectual part of the man, and not the moral side.

"You err" (wrote Byron to Moore on the occasion of the latter saying that such a poem as the 'Vision of Judgment' could not have been written in a desponding mood): "a man's poetry is a distinct faculty or soul, and has no more to do with the every-day individual than the inspiration of the Pythoness when removed from her tripod." To which Moore observes: "My remark has been hasty and inconsiderate, and Lord Byron's is the view borne out by all experience. Almost all the tragic and gloomy writers have been, in social life, mirthful persons. The author of the 'Night Thoughts' was a fellow of infinite jest; and of the pathetic Otway, Pope says, 'He! why, he would laugh all the day long; he would do nothing but laugh!'"

It is known that many licentious writers have led very regular and chaste lives; that many who have sung their success with women have not dared to declare their love to one woman; that all Sterne's sentiment was perfectly ideal, and proceeded always

from the head and never from the heart; that Seneca's morality was no barrier to his practising usury; and that, according to Plutarch, Demosthenes was a very questionable moralist in practice. Why, then, necessarily conclude that a moralist is a moral man, or a sarcastic satirist a deceitful one, or the man who describes scenes of blood and carnage a monster of cruelty? Does not Montaigne say of authors that they must be judged by their merits, and not by their morals, nor by that show of works which they exhibit to the world. Why, then, does M. Lamartine appreciate Byron according to his satirical works, when all those who knew him assert that his real character was very different to his literary one? He did not personify, but create his heroes; which are two very different things.

Like Salvator Rosa, who, the meekest of men in private life, could only find a vent to his talent by painting scenes of brigandage and horror, so did Byron's genius require to go down into the darkest recesses of the passions which generate remorse, crime, and heroism, to find that spark which fired his genius. But it must be owned, that even his great qualities were causes of the false judgment of the world upon him. Thus, in describing Childe Harold, he no doubt wished to paint a side of nature which had not yet been seen. At the scenes of despair, at the scenes of doubt which assail him, the poet assists rather as the historian than as the actor. And the same holds good for other poems, where he describes those peculiar diseases of the mind which great geniuses alone can comprehend, though they need not have experienced them. But it was the

very life which he infused into his heroes that made it appear as if they could not personify any one but himself. And as to their faults, because he was wont to give them his qualities, it was argued, that since the latter were observable to be common to the author and the creations of his fancy, the faults of these must likewise be his. If only the faults, why not also the crimes? Thus it came that, caring little for their want of argument, Byron's enemies erected themselves into avengers of too much talent bestowed upon one single man.

Byron might have taken up his own defence, but did not care to do so, or did it carelessly in some letters written to intimate friends. To Moore he wrote:— "Like all imaginative men, I, of course, embody myself with the character while I draw it; but not a moment after the pen is from the paper." He always, however, begged that he might be judged by his acts; and a short time before he died at Missolonghi, after recommending Colonel Stanhope to desist from then pressing the necessity of giving liberty to the press, and from recommending the works of Bentham to a people who could not even read, Byron replied to the Colonel's rather hasty remarks, "Judge me by my acts." This request he had often repeated, as his life was not one of those which fear the light of day. All in vain. His enemies were not satisfied with this means of putting an end to their calumnies.

Where does M. de Lamartine find the truth which he proposes to tell the world about Byron? Not surely among the writers whose biographies of Byron were either works of revenge or of speculation, and sometimes both. Not in the conversations

which Byron had with several people, and on the credulity of whom he loved to speculate. It cannot, therefore, be in the biographies of men who have written erroneously, and have not understood their subject; but in Moore, in Parry, in Count Gamba's works, and, may be, in a few others. I am, however, far from saying, that Moore has acted towards Lord Byron with all that friendly feeling which Byron recommended to him on asking him to write the Life of Sheridan, "without offending the living or insulting the dead." Quite the contrary. I take it that Moore has wholly disregarded his duties as a true friend, by publishing essentially private letters, by introducing into his books certain anecdotes which he might, if even they were true, have advantageously left out; and in failing, from fear of wounding living susceptibilities, to assert with energy that which he knew to be the real case with Byron. More than any one, Moore experienced the fatal influence which injures independence in aristocratic England. An Irishman by birth, and a commoner, Moore was flattered to find himself elevated by his talents to a position in aristocratic circles which he owed to his talents, but which he was loath to resign. The English aristocracy then formed a kind of clique whose wish it was to govern England on the condition that its secret of governing should not be revealed, and was furious with Byron, who was one of them, for revealing their weaknesses and upbraiding their pretensions. Moore wished to live amongst the statesmen and noblemen whose despotic views and bad policy Byron had openly condemned, and among those lovely islanders in whose number there might

be found more Adelinas than Auroras, and to whom Byron had preferred foreign beauties. Moore, in short, wished to live with the literary men whom Byron had ridiculed in his satires, and among the high clergy, then as intolerant as they were hypocritical, and who, as Byron said, forgot Christ alone in their Christianity. Moore, whose necessity it had become to live among these open revilers and enemies of Byron, after allowing the memoirs of Byron to be burnt, because in them some of the above-named personages were unmasked, this Moore was weak enough not to proclaim energetically that Byron's character was as great as his genius, but to do so only timidly. By way of obtaining pardon even for this mite of justice to the friend who was gone, Moore actually condescended to associate himself with those who pleaded extenuating circumstances for Byron's temper, like Walter Scott and other poets. But truth comes out, nevertheless, in Moore; and in the perusal of Byron's truthful and simple letters we find him there displayed in all his admirable and unique worth as an intellectual and a moral man. We find him adorned with all the virtues which Heaven gave him at his birth; his real goodness, which neither injustice nor misfortune could alter; his generosity, which not only made him disbelieve in ingratitude, but actually incited him to render good for evil and obliged him to own that "he could not keep his resentments;" his gratitude for the little that is done for him; his sincerity; his openness of character; his greatness and disinterestedness. "His very failings were those of a sincere, a generous, and a noble mind," says a biographer

who knew him well. His contempt for base actions; his love of equity; his passion for truth, which was carried almost to a hatred of cant and hypocrisy, were the immediate causes of his want of fairness in his opinion of himself and of his self-accusation of things most contrary to his nature.

So singular a trait in his character was by no means the result of eccentricity, but the result of an exceptional assembly of rare qualities which met for the first time in one man, and which, shining in the midst of a most corrupt society, constituted almost more an anomaly which became a real defect, hurtful, however, to himself only. His ideal of the beautiful magnified weaknesses into crimes, and physical failings into deformities. Thus it is that with the saints the slightest transgression of the laws appears at once in the light of mortal sin. St. Augustin calls the greediness of his youth a crime. The result of all this was that his very virtues mystified the world and caused it to believe that the faults which he attributed to himself were nothing in comparison of those which he really had.

Byron, however, was indignant at being so unfairly treated. He treated with contempt the men who calumniated him, and as if they were idiots. He can safely, therefore, be blamed for not urging enough his own defence. This, to my mind, constitutes his capital fault, unless one considers defects of character those changes of humour which rapidly passed from gaiety to melancholy, or his pretended irritability, which was merely a slight disposition to be impatient. These were all the result of his poetical

nature, added to the effects of early education and to those of certain family circumstances. It would be too hard and too unfair to attribute these slight weaknesses of character proper to great genius to a bad nature or to misanthropy.

Had Lord Byron not been impatient he must have been satisfied with his own condition and indifferent to that of others. In other words, he must have been an egotist, which he was not. He was gay by nature, and repeatedly showed it; but he had been sorely wounded by the injustice of men, and his marriage with Miss Milbank had undermined his peace and happiness. How, then, could he escape the occasional pangs of grief, and not betray outwardly the pain which devoured him inwardly. In such moments it was a relief to him to heave a sigh, or take up a pen to vent his grief in rhyme. His misanthropy was quite foreign to his nature. All those who knew him can bear testimony to the falseness of the accusation.

Moore, who knew him so well, and who always speaks the truth when no longer under the influences which at times overpower him, after speaking of the charm of Byron's manner when he saw him for the first time, ends by saying: "It may be asserted that never did there exist before, and it is most probable never will exist again, a combination of such vast mental power and surpassing genius, with so many others of those advantages and attractions by which the world is in general dazzled and captivated."

When, therefore, M. de Lamartine seeks the truth in Moore, Parry, and some other biographers respect-

ing Byron, he will find that this eminently beautiful form was in harmony with the splendid intellect and moral qualities of the man. M. de Lamartine will see that Byron was a good and devoted son, a tender father and brother, a faithful friend, an indulgent master, beloved by all who ever knew him, and who was never accused, even by his enemies, of having tried to seduce an innocent young girl, or having disturbed the peace of conjugal bliss. He will behold his charity, which was universal and unbounded; a pride which never stooped to be subservient of those in power; a firm political faith; a contempt of public dignities, so far as they reflected glory upon himself; and such a spirit of humility that he was ever ready to blame himself and follow the advice of those whom he deemed to be animated by no hostile spirit against himself.

When M. de Lamartine sees all this, not merely written down as in these pages, but actually proved by facts and irrefutable testimonies, his loyal soul must revolt and wish to do justice to himself by rejecting his former opinions. He will understand that if he himself has been called a drinker of blood by the party whom he styles bigoted and composed of old men, Byron, too, may have been calumniated. Looking, then, at the great poet in his proper light, that is, in the plenitude of his rare qualities, and considering him under each of the circumstances of his life, M. de Lamartine will own that he had misunderstood that most admirable of characters, and grant that the "satanic laughter" of which he spoke was, on the contrary, the smile which was so beautiful that it might have lighted up by its magic soft rays the dark regions of Satan. His doubts being cleared away, M. de Lamar-

tine will end by saying that Byron was "an angel, not a demon."

Byron's misfortune was to have been born in the England of those days. Do you remember his beautiful lines in the 'Due Foscari'?—

> "He might have lived,
> So form'd for gentle privacy of life,
> So loving, so beloved; the native of
> Another land, and who so blest and blessing
> As my poor Foscari? Nothing was wanting
> Unto his happiness and mine save not
> To be Venetian."

In writing these lines Byron must have thought of his own fate. He was scarcely British by origin, and very little so by his turn of mind, or by his tastes or by the nature of his genius. "My ancestors are not Saxon, they are Norman," he said; "and my blood is all meridian."

If, instead of being born in England then, he had come before the world when his star would have been hailed with the same love and regard that was granted to Dante in Italy, to Chateaubriand and Lamartine in France, or to Goethe in Germany, who would ever have blamed him for the slight errors which fell from his pen in 'Don Juan,'—a poem written hastily and with carelessness, but of which it can be said, as Montesquieu said of the prettiest women, "their part has more gravity and importance than is generally thought." If the sense of the ridiculous is ever stronger among people whose appreciation of the beautiful is keenest, who more than Byron could have possessed it to a higher degree? Is it therefore to be marvelled at that, in order to make the truth he revealed accessible to all, and such whose minds had rusted in egotism

and routine, he should have given to them a new and sarcastic form?

Had he been born anywhere but in the England of those days, he never would have been accused of mocking virtue because he claimed for it reality of character, and not that superficial form which he saw existed then in society. He believed it right to scorn the appearances of virtue put on only for the purpose of reaping its advantages. No one respected more than he did all that was really holy, virtuous, and respectable; but who could blame him for wishing to denounce hypocrisy? As for his supposed scepticism, and his expressions of despair, they may be classed with the misgivings of Job, of Pascal, of Lamartine, of Chateaubriand, and of other great minds, for whom the unknown world is a source of constant anxiety of thought, and whose cry of despair is rather a supplication to the Almighty that He would revealhimself more to their eyes. It must be borne in mind that the scepticism which some lines in his poems denounce is one of which the desponding nature calls more for our sympathy than our denunciations, since "we discover in the midst of these doubts," says Moore, "an innate piety which might have become tepid but never quite cold." His own words should be remembered when he writes, as a note to the two first cantos of 'Childe Harold,' that the spirit of the stanzas reflects grief and illness, more than an obstinate and mocking scepticism; and so they do. They do not embody any conclusions, but are only the expression of a passionate appeal to the Almighty to come to the rescue and proclaim the victory of faith.

Could anything but a very ordinary event be seen

in his separation from a wife who was in no way suited to him, and whose worth can be esteemed by the remark which she addressed to Byron some three weeks after her marriage: "When, my Lord, do you intend to give up your habit of versifying?" And, alas! could he possibly be happy, born as he was in a country where party prejudices ran so high? where his first satire had created for him so many enemies? where some of his poems had roused political anger against him, and where his truth, his honesty, could not patiently bear with the hypocrisy of those who surrounded him, and where, in fact, he had had the misfortune to marry Miss Milbank?

The great minds whom God designs to be the apostles of truth on earth, make use for that purpose of the most efficacious means at their disposal. The universal genius of Byron allowed of his making use of every means to arrive at his end. He was able to be at once pathetic, comic, tragical, satirical, vehement, scoffing, bitter, and pleasant. This universality of talents, directed against Englishmen, was injurious to his peace of mind.

When Byron went to Italy his heart was broken down with real and not imaginary sorrows. These were not of that kind which create perfection, but were the result of an unheard-of persecution on account of a family difference in which he was much more the victim than the culprit.

He required to live in a milder climate, and a softer atmosphere to breathe in. He found both at Venice; and under their influence his mind took a new turn, which had remained undeveloped whilst in his own clouded country.

In the study of Italian literature he met with the Bernesque poetry, which is so lightly and elegantly sarcastic. He made the acquaintance of Buratti, the clever and charming satirist. He began, himself, to perceive the baseness of men, and found in an æsthetical mockery of human failings the most copious of the poetical currents of his mind. The more his friends and his enemies told him of the calumnies which were uttered against him, so much the more did Byron's contempt swell into disdain; and to this circumstance did 'Beppo' and 'Don Juan' owe their appearance.

The social condition of his country and the prevalent cant opened to him a field for reflection at Venice, where customs were so different and manners so tolerant. Seeing new horizons before him, he was more than ever disgusted at the judgments of those who calumniated him, and ended by believing it to be best to laugh at their silly efforts to ruin him. He then wrote 'Beppo' and afterwards 'Don Juan.'

He was mistaken, however, in believing that in England this new style of poetry would be liked. His jests and sarcasms were not understood by the greater portion of those against whom they were levelled. The nature of the Bernese poetry being essentially French, England could not, with its serious tendencies, like a production in which the moral purpose was artistically veiled. From that day forward a severance took place between Byron and his countrymen. What had enchanted the French displeased them, and Byron in vain translated the 'Morgante' of Pulci, to show them what a priest could say in that style of poetry in a Catholic country. In vain did he write

to his friends that "'Don Juan' will be known by-and-bye for what it is intended,—a satire on the abuses of the present state of society, and not an eulogy of vice. It may be now and then voluptuous: I can't help it. Ariosto is worse; Smollett ten times worse; Fielding no better. No girl will ever be seduced by reading 'Don Juan,'" &c.

But he was blamed just because he jested. To his ultramontane tone they would have preferred him to blaspheme in coarse Saxon.

One of the best of Byron's biographers asserts that he was a French mind lost on the borders of the Thames. Lord Byron had every kind of mind, and that is why he was equally French. But in addressing his countrymen, as such, he heaped a mountain of abuse upon his head.

With the most moral portion of the English public a violent satire would have had better chance of success. With the higher classes the work was read with avidity and pleasure. It was not owned, because there were too many reasons for condemning it; but it found its way under many a pillow, to prove to the country how virtue and patriotism were endangered by this production.

Murray made himself the echo of all this wrath, and Lord Byron, not able at times to contain his, wrote to him much to the following purpose—

"I intend to write my best work in Italian, and I am working at it. As for the opinion of the English, which you mention, let them know how much it is worth before they come and insult me by their condescension.

"I have not written for their pleasure; if they find

theirs in the perusal of my works, it is because they wish it. I have never flattered their opinion or their pride, nor shall I ever do so. I have no intention either of writing books for women or to '*dilettar le femine e la plese.*' I have written merely from impulse and from passion, and not for their sweet voices. I know what their applause is worth; few writers have had more. They made of me a kind of popular idol without my ever wishing, and kicked me down from the pedestal upon which their caprice had raised me. But the idol did not break in the fall, and now they would like to raise it again, but they shall not." As soon as they saw that Byron was perfectly happy in Italy, and that their abuse did him but very little harm, they gave full vent to their rage.

They had shown how little they knew him when they identified him with his heroes; they found that they knew even less of him when he appeared to them in the reality of his character. Calumny followed upon calumny. Unable to find him at fault, they interpreted his words themselves, and gave them a different meaning. Everything was figurative of some wickedness, and to the simplest expressions some vile intention was attributed.

They depreciated his works, in which are to be found such admirable and varied types of women characters, that they even surpass in beauty those of Shakespeare (Angiolina, Myrrha, Annah): they said that Faliero wanted interest, that Sardanapalus was a voluptuary; that Satan in 'Cain' did not speak as a theologian (how could he?), that there were irreverent tendencies in his sacred dramas — and finally that his declaration—

"My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the soul,"

was hazardous, and almost that of an atheist. Atheist! he! who considered atheists fools.

On leaving Venice for Ravenna,* where he had spent a few months, only by way of distraction in the

* Galt says, "It was in the course of the passage to the island of Zea, where he was put on shore, that one of the most emphatic incidents of his life occurred; an incident which throws a remarkable gleam into the springs and intricacies of his character, more perhaps than anything which has yet been mentioned. One day, as he was walking the quarterdeck, he lifted an attaghan (it might be one of the midshipmen's weapons), and unsheathing it, said, contemplating the blade, '*I should like to know how a person feels after committing murder.*' By those who have inquiringly noticed the extraordinary cast of his metaphysical associations, this dagger scene must be regarded as both impressive and solemn; the wish to know how a man felt after committing murder does not imply any desire to perpetrate the crime. The feeling might be appreciated by experiencing any actual degree of guilt; for it is not the deed,—the sentiment which follows it makes the horror. But it is doing injustice to suppose the expression of such a wish dictated by desire. Lord Byron has been heard to express, in the eccentricity of conversation, wishes for a more intense knowledge of remorse than murder itself could give. There is, however, a wide and wild difference between the curiosity that prompts the wish to know the exactitude of any feeling or idea, and the direful passions that instigate to guilty gratifications."—'Galt,' 152.

His curiosity was psychological and philosophical, that of a great artist wishing to explore the heart of man in its darkest depths.

On the eve of his departure from Rome he assisted at the execution of three assassins, remaining to the end, although this spectacle threw him into a perfect fever, causing such thirst and trembling that he could hardly hold up his opera-glass.

At Venice he preferred Madame Benzoni's conversation to that of Madame Albrizzi, because she was more thoroughly Venetian, and as such more fitted for the study he wished to make of national manners. He used to say that *everything in the world ought to be seen once*, and it is to this idea that we must specially attribute some of the oddities so exaggerated and so much criticised during his short stay at Venice, for in reality he had none of these tastes.

Parry says, "Lord Byron had an insatiable curiosity, he was for ever making questions and researches. He wished me to relate to him all the most trifling incidents of my life in America, Virginia, and Canada."—'Parry,' 180.

midst of his sorrows and serious occupations, he was accused of dissolute conduct; and the serious attachment which he had wished to avoid, but which had mastered his whole heart, and induced him to live an isolated life with the person he loved in a town of Romagna, far from all that could flatter his vanity and from all intercourse with his countrymen, was brought against him to show that he lived the life of an Epicurean, and brought misery into the heart of families.

All this, no doubt, might have again called for his contempt, but on his way from Ravenna to Pisa he wrote the outpourings of his mind in a poem, the last lines of which are:—

"Oh Fame! if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover,
The thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

"*There* chiefly I sought thee, *there* only I found thee;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;
When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story,
I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory."

His heart was wounded by the persecutions to which those he loved were subjected. His thoughts were for his daughter, who was growing up in the midst of her father's enemies, and for his beloved sister who was praying for him. He contemplated in the future the time when he could show the moral and heroic power of his soul. He looked forward to the great deeds by which he was going to astonish them, and perhaps call for their admiration, instead of his writings, which had never reaped for him anything but pain.

"If I live," he wrote to Moore, "you will see that I shall do something better than rhyming."

Truth, however, when told by such men as Byron, and however ungraciously received, must guide in the end the steps of those who walk in its wake.

This has been the case with Byron's poetry. Its influence over the minds of Englishmen has been very salutary and great, and is one of the principal causes which brought on a reform of the rooted prejudices and opinions of the public in England, by the necessity under which it placed them of looking into the defects of the law and of the constitution, to which they had hitherto so crouchingly submitted. Since then the feeling of good-will towards other nations has materially increased in that great country.

Others have improved the way which Byron opened up for reform, and thanks to him England at his death began to lose her excessive susceptibility. She became accustomed to listen to the truth, and those who now proclaim it are not required to be exiled, or to suffer as Byron did up to the time of his death. His sufferings, no doubt, paved his way to everlasting glory, but his heroic death left him at the mercy of the enemies who survived him.

If ever a premature death was unfortunate, Byron's was; not only for him, because he was on the point of giving to the world the proof of those virtues which had been denied him, but also for humanity, by the loss of various treasures which will probably never be found again.

The epoch, however, of faint words and unbecoming silence has gone by even in England. Already one of the greatest men of England has claimed a monument in Westminster Abbey, which had been denied to his memory by the bigoted rancour of the man who

was Dean at the time of Byron's death, denied to that poet whom another great English statesman has called "a great writer, but a still greater man."

There remains a still more imperious duty to be fulfilled by those who have been able to appreciate his great qualities. That duty is to proclaim them and to prevent the further spread of falsehood and error as to his real character.

This is a very long letter, my dear Count, but you know how long all letters must be which are intended to refute opinions and to rectify judgments. M. de Lamartine has the excellent habit of listening to your advice, and that is why I have had at heart to let you know the truth about Byron. The present work will adduce the proofs of the appreciations contained in this letter. I know that you do not require them, but also that the public does.

Pray accept, &c. ———.

CHAPTER II.

Portrait of Lord Byron.

The following letter was addressed to M. de Lamartine, who had asked the author of these pages to give him the "portrait physique" of Lord Byron.

My dear Monsieur de Lamartine,

Being on the point of departure, I nevertheless wish to send you a few explanations which must serve as my apology. You have asked me to draw the portrait of Lord Byron, and I have promised you that I would do so. I now see that my promise was presumptuous. Every time I have endeavoured to trace it, I have had to put down my pen, discouraged as I was by the fact of my always discovering too many obstacles between my reminiscences and the possibility of expressing them. My attempts appeared to me at times to be a profanation by the smallness of their character; at others, they bore the mark of an extreme enthusiasm, which, however, seemed to me very weak in its results and very ridiculous in its want of power. Images which are preserved in thought to a degree which may almost be considered supernatural, are susceptible of too much change during the short transit of the mind to the pen.

The Almighty has created beings of such harmonious and ideal beauty that they defy description or

analysis. Such a one was Lord Byron. His wonderful beauty of expression has never been rendered either by the brush of the painter or the sculptor's chisel. It summed up in one magnificent type the highest expression of every possible kind of beauty. If his genius and his great heart could have chosen a human form by which they could have been well represented, they could not have chosen another! Genius shone in his very looks. All the effects and emotions of a great soul were therein reflected as well as those of an eminently good and generous heart, and indeed contrasts were visible which are scarcely ever united in one and the same person. His eyes seized and betrayed the sentiments which animated him, with a rapidity and transparency such as called forth from Sir Walter Scott the remark, that the fine head of his young rival "was like unto a beautiful alabaster vase lightened up by an interior lamp." To see him, was to understand thoroughly how really false were the calumnies spread about as to his character. The mass, by their obstinacy in identifying him with the imaginary types of his poems, and in judging him by a few eccentricities of early youth, as well as by various bold thoughts and expressions, had represented to themselves a factitious Byron, totally at variance with the real man. Calumnies, which unfortunately he passed over in disdainful silence, have circulated as acknowledged facts. Time has destroyed many, but it would not be correct to say that they have all entirely been destroyed. Lord Byron was silent, because he depended upon time to silence his calumniators. All those who saw him must have experienced the charm which surrounded him as a

kind of sympathetic atmosphere, gaining all hearts to him. What can be said to those who never saw him? Tell them to look at the pictures of him which were painted by Saunders, by Phillips, by Holmes, or by Westall? All these, although the works of great artists, are full of faults. Saunders' picture represents him with thick lips, whereas his lips were harmoniously perfect: Holmes almost gives him a large instead of his well-proportioned and elegant head! In Phillips' picture the expression is one of haughtiness and affected dignity, never once visible to those who ever saw him.*

"These portraits," says Dallas, "will certainly present to the stranger and to posterity that which it is possible for the brush to reproduce so far as the features are concerned, but the charm of speech and the grace of movement must be left to the imagination of those who have had no opportunity to observe them. No brush can paint these."

The picture of Byron by Westall is superior to the others, but does not come up to the original. As for the copies and engravings which have been taken from these pictures, and circulated, they are all exaggerated, and deserve the appellation of caricatures.

Can his portrait be found in the descriptions given

* Among the bad portraits of Lord Byron spread over the world, there is one that surpasses all others in ugliness, which is often put up for sale, and which a mercantile spirit wishes to pass off for a good likeness; it was done by an American, Mr. West,—an excellent man, but a very bad painter. This portrait, which America requested to have taken, and which Lord Byron consented to sit for, was begun at Montenero, near Leghorn; but Lord Byron, being obliged to leave Montenero suddenly, could only give Mr. West two or three sittings. It was then finished from memory, and, far from being at all like Lord Byron, is a frightful caricature, which his family or friends ought to destroy.

by his biographers? But biographers seek far more to amuse and astonish, in order that their writings may be read, than to adhere to the simple truth.

It cannot be denied, however, that in the portraits which several, such as Moore, Dallas, Sir Walter Scott, Disraeli, in London, the Countess Albrizzi at Venice, Beyle (Stendhal) at Milan, Lady Blessington and Mrs. Shelley in Italy, have drawn of Lord Byron there is much truth, accompanied by certain qualifications which it is well to explain. I shall therefore give in their own words (preferring them to my own impressions) the unanimous testimony of those who saw him, be they friends or beings for whom he was indifferent. Here are Moore's words:—"Of his face, the beauty may be pronounced to have been of the highest order, as combining at once regularity of features with the most varied and interesting expression.

"His eyes, though of a light gray, were capable of all extremes of expression, from the most joyous hilarity to the deepest sadness, from the very sunshine of benevolence to the most concentrated scorn or rage. But it was in the mouth and chin that the great beauty as well as expression of his fine countenance lay.

"His head was remarkably small, so much so as to be rather out of proportion with his face. The forehead, though a little too narrow, was high, and appeared more so from his having his hair (to preserve it, as he said) shaved over the temples. Still the glossy dark brown curls, clustering over his head, [illegible] the finish to its beauty. When to this is added [illegible]is nose, though handsomely was rather thickly [illegible], that his teeth were white and regular, and his

complexion colourless, as good an idea perhaps as it is in the power of mere words to convey may be conceived of his features.

"In height he was, as he himself has informed us, five feet eight inches and a half, and to the length of his limbs he attributed his being such a good swimmer. His hands were very white, and, according to his own notions of the size of hands as indicating birth, aristocratically small."

"What I chiefly remember to have remarked," adds Moore, "when I was first introduced to him, was the gentleness of his voice and manners, the nobleness of his air, his beauty, and his marked kindness to myself. Being in mourning for his mother, the colour as well of his dress, as of his glossy, curling and picturesque hair, gave more effect to the pure, spiritual paleness of his features, in the expression of which, when he spoke, there was a perpetual play of lively thought, though melancholy was their habitual character when in repose."

When Moore saw him again at Venice, some eight years after the first impressions which Byron's beauty had produced upon him in London (1812), he noted a change in the character of that beauty.

"He had grown fatter both in person and face, and the latter had most suffered by the change—having lost by the enlargement of the features some of that refined and spiritualised look that had in other times distinguished it. . . . . He was still, however, eminently handsome, and in exchange for whatever his features might have lost of their high romantic character, they had become more fitted for the expression of that arch, waggish wisdom, that

epicurean play of humour, which he had shown to be equally inherent in his various and prodigally gifted nature; while by the somewhat increased roundness of the contours the resemblance of his finely-formed mouth and chin to those of the Belvedere Apollo had become still more striking." *

Here are now the words of Lady B———, who saw him a few weeks only before his last departure for Greece. This lady had conceived a totally different idea of Byron. According to her, Byron would have appeared affected, *triste*, in accordance with certain portraits and certain types in his poems. But, if in order not to cause any jealousy among the living, she dared not reveal all her admiration, she at least suffered it to appear from time to time.

"There are moments," she says, "when Lord Byron's face is shadowed over with the pale cast of thought, and then his head might serve as a model for a sculptor or a painter to represent the ideal of poesy. His head is particularly well formed: his forehead is high, and powerfully indicative of his intellect: his eyes are full of expression: his nose is beautiful in profile, though a little thickly shaped. His eyebrows are perfectly drawn, but his mouth is perfection. Many pictures have been painted of him, but the excessive beauty of his lips escaped every painter and sculptor. In their ceaseless play they represented every emotion, whether pale with anger, curled in disdain, smiling in triumph, or dimpled with archness and love."

This portrait cannot be suspected of partiality;

* Moore, vol. ii., p. 248.

for, whether justly or not, she did not enjoy Lord Byron's sympathy, and knew it; she had also to forgive him various little circumstances which had wounded her "amour propre," and was obliged to measure her praise in order not to create any jealousy with certain people who surrounded him and who had some pretension to beauty.

Here is the portrait of him which another lady (the Comtesse Albrizzi of Venice) has drawn, notwithstanding her wounded pride at the refusal of Lord Byron to allow her to write a portrait of him and to continue her visits to him at Venice :—

"What serenity on his forehead! What beautiful auburn, silken, brilliant, and naturally curled hair! What variety of expression in his sky-blue eyes! His teeth were like pearls, his cheeks had the delicate tint of a pale rose; his neck, which was always bare, was of the purest white. His hands were real works of art. His whole frame was faultless, and many found rather a particular grace of manner than a fault in the slight undulation of his person on entering a room. This bending of the body was, however, so slight that the cause of it was hardly ever inquired into."

As I have mentioned the deformity of his foot, even before quoting other testimonies to his beauty, I shall tarry awhile and speak of this defect, the only one in so pre-eminently favoured a being. What was this defect, since all becomes illustrious in an illustrious man? Was it visible? Was it true that Lord Byron felt this imperfection so keenly? Here is the truth.

No defect existed in the formation of his limbs; his

slight infirmity was nothing but the result of weakness of one of his ankles.

His habit of ever being on horseback had brought on the emaciation of his legs, as evinced by the post-mortem examination; besides which, the best proof of this has been lately given in an English newspaper much to the following effect:—

"Mrs. Wildman (the widow of the Colonel who had bought Newstead) has lately given to the Naturalist Society of Nottingham several objects which had belonged to Lord Byron, and amongst others his boot and shoe trees. These trees are about nine inches long, narrow, and generally of a symmetrical form. They were accompanied by the following statement of Mr. Swift, bootmaker, who worked for his Lordship from 1805 to 1807. Swift is still alive, and continues to reside at Southwell. His testimony as to the genuineness of the trees, and to the nature of Lord Byron's deformity, of which so many contradictory assertions have circulated, is as follows:—

"'William Swift, bootmaker at Southwell, Nottinghamshire, having had the honour of working for Lord Byron when residing at Southwell from 1805 to 1807, asserts that these were the trees upon which his Lordship's boots and shoes were made, and that the last pair delivered was on the 10th of May, 1807. He, moreover, affirms that his Lordship had not a club foot, as has been said, but that both his feet were equally well formed, one, however, being an inch and a half shorter than the other. The defect was not in the foot but in the ankle, which, being weak, caused the foot to turn out too much. To

remedy this his Lordship wore a very light and thin boot, which was tightly laced just under the sole, and, when a boy, he was made to wear a piece of iron with a joint at the ankle, which passed behind the leg and was tied behind the shoe. The calf of this leg was weaker than the other, and it was the left leg.

(Signed) "'WILLIAM SWIFT.'"

This, then, is the extent of the defect of which so much has been said, and which has been called a deformity. As to its being visible, all those who knew him assert that it was so little evident that it was even impossible to discover in which of the legs or feet the fault existed. To the testimonies already quoted I must add another:—

"His defect," says Mr. Galt, "was scarcely visible. He had a way of walking which made it appear almost imperceptible, and indeed entirely so. I spent several days on board a ship with him without discovering this defect; and, in truth, so little perceptible was it that a doubt always existed in my mind whether it might not be the effect of a temporary accident rather than a natural defect."

All those who knew him being therefore agreed in this opinion, that of people who were not acquainted with him is of no value. But if, in the material appreciation of a defect, they have not been able to err, several have erred in their moral appreciation of the fact by pretending that Lord Byron, for imaginary reasons, was exceedingly sensible of this defect. This excessive sensibility was a pure invention on the part of his biographers. When he

did experience it (which was never but to a very moderate extent), it was only because, physically speaking, he suffered from it. Under the sole of the weak foot he at times experienced a painful sensation, especially after long walks.

"Once, at Genoa," says Mme. G., "he walked down the hill of Albaro to the seaside with me, by a rugged and rough path. When we had reached the shore he was very well and lively. But it was an exceedingly hot day, and the return home fatigued him greatly. When home I told him I thought he looked ill. 'Yes,' said he, 'I suffer greatly from my foot; it can hardly be conceived how much I suffer at times from that pain,' and he continued to speak to me about this defect with great simplicity and indifference."

He used often even to laugh at it, so superior was he to that weakness. "Beware," said Count Gamba to him on one occasion whilst riding with him, and on reaching some dangerous spot, "beware of falling and breaking your neck." "I should decidedly not like it," said Byron; "but if this leg of which I don't make much use were to break, it would be the same to me, and perhaps then I should be able to procure myself a more useful one."

The sensitiveness, therefore, which he was said to experience, and which would have been childish in him, was in reality only the occasional experience of a physical pain which did not, however, affect his strength, nor the grace of his movements, in all those physical exercises to which he was so much attached. It in no wise altered his good looks, and, as a proof of this, I shall again bring testimonies, giving first

that of M. N., who was at Constantinople when Byron arrived there for the first time, and who thus describes him in a review which he wrote of him after Byron's death :—

"A stranger then entered the bazaar. He wore a scarlet cloak, richly embroidered with gold in the style of an English aide-de-camp's dress uniform. He was attended by a janissary attached to the English Embassy and by a cicerone: he appeared to be about twenty-two. His features were of so exquisite a delicacy, that one might almost have given him a feminine appearance, but for the manly expression of his fine blue eyes. On entering the inner shop he took off his hat, and showed a head of curly auburn hair, which improved in no small degree the uncommon beauty of his face. The impression his whole appearance made upon my mind, was such that it has ever remained most deeply engraven on it; and although fifteen years have since gone by, the lapse of time has not in the least impaired the freshness of the recollection." Then, speaking of his manner, he goes on to say :—"There was so irresistible an attraction in his manner, that only those who have been so fortunate as to be admitted to his intimacy can have felt its power."

Moore once asked Lady Holland whether she believed that Lady Byron had ever really loved Lord Byron. "Could it be otherwise?" replied Lady Holland. "Was it possible not to love so loveable a creature? I see him there now, surrounded as it were by that great light; oh, how handsome he was!"

One of the most difficult things to define was the

colour of his eyes. It was a mixture of blue, grey, and violet, and these various colours were each uppermost according to the thought which occupied his mind or his heart. "Tell me, dear," said the little Eliza to her sister, whose enthusiasm for Byron she shared, "tell me what is the colour of his eyes?" "I cannot say; I believe them to be dark," answered Miss Eliza, "but all I know is that they have quite a supernatural splendour." And one day, having looked at them with greater attention in order to ascertain their colour, she said, "They are the finest eyes in the world, but not dark, as I had at first believed. Their hue is that of the eyes of Mary Stuart, and his long, black eye-lashes make them appear dark. Never did I before, nor ever again shall I, see such eyes! As for his hands, they are the most beautiful hands, for a man, I ever saw. His voice is a sweet melody." *

Sir Walter Scott was enchanted when he could dilate on the extraordinary beauty of Byron. One day, at Mr. Home Drummond's, he exclaimed :—"As for poets, I have seen the best that this country has produced, and although Burns had the finest eyes that can be imagined, I never thought that any man except Byron could give an artist the exact idea of a poet. His portraits do not do him the least justice; the varnish is there, but the ray of sunshine is wanting to light them up. The beauty of Byron," he added "is one which makes one dream."

Colonel Wildman, his colleague at Harrow, and his friend, was always wont to say, "Lord Byron is the only man among all those I have seen, who may be called, without restriction, a really handsome man."

* Miss E. Smith.

Disraeli, in his novel entitled 'Venetia,' speaks thus of the beauty of Hubert (who is Lord Byron) when Venetia finds his portrait:—

"That being of supernatural beauty is her father. Young as he was, command and genius, the pride of noble passions, all the glory of a creative mind, seemed stamped upon his brow. With all his marvellous beauty he seemed a being born for greatness. . . Its reality exceeded the wildest dreams of her romance, her brightest visions of grace and loveliness and genius seemed personified in this form. He was a man in the very spring of sunny youth and of radiant beauty. He was above the middle height, yet with a form that displayed exquisite grace. . . It was a countenance of singular loveliness and power. The lips and the moulding of the chin resembled the eager and impassioned tenderness of the shape of Antinous; but instead of the effeminate sullenness of the eye, and the narrow smoothness of the forehead, shone an expression of profound and piercing thought. On each side of the clear and open brow descended, even to the shoulders, the clustering locks of golden hair; while the eyes, large and yet deep, beamed with a spiritual energy, and shone like two wells of crystalline water that reflect the all-beholding heavens."

M. Beyle (Stendhal) writes to Mr. Swanton Belloc:—"It was in the autumn of the year 1816 that I met Lord Byron at the theatre of the Scala, at Milan, in the box of the Bremen Minister. I was struck with Lord Byron's eyes at the time when he was listening to a sestetto in Mayer's opera of 'Elena. I never in my life saw anything more beautiful or more expressive. Even now, when I think of the ex-

pression which a great painter should give to genius, I always have before me that magnificent head. I had a moment of enthusiasm." And further, he adds that one day he saw him listening to Monti whilst the latter was singing his first couplet in the 'Mascheroniana.' "I shall never forget," said he, "the divine expression of his look; it was the serene look of genius and power."

I might multiply these testimonies of people who have seen him, and fill many pages; their particular character is their uniform resemblance. This proves the soundness of the ground on which their truth is based. I will add one more testimony to the others, that of Mrs. Shelley, which is even nearer the truth, and condenses all the others:—"Lord Byron," said this distinguished woman, "was the first genius of his age and the handsomest of men."

In all these portraits there is much truth, but they are not sufficiently complete to give those who never saw him any but a faint idea of his smile, or of his mouth, which seemed to be not suited to material purposes, and to be purely intellectual and divine; of his eyes, which changed from one colour to another according to the various emotions of his soul, but the habitual expression of which was that of an infinite and intense softness; of his sublime and noble brow; of his melodious voice, which attracted and captivated; and of that kind of supernatural light which seemed to surround him like a halo.

This inability on the part of artists and biographers to render exactly Byron's features and looks, is not to be wondered at, for although perfectly regular, his features derived their principal beauty

from the life which his soul instilled into them. The emotions of his heart, the changes of his thoughts, appeared so variously upon his countenance, and gave the latter so changeable a cast, that it sufficed not for the artist who had to portray him, to gaze at and study him, as one generally does less gifted or elevated organisations. The reality was more likely to be well interpreted when it stood a prey to the various emotions of the soul; in his leisure hours, in the full enjoyment of life and love, he was satisfied with the knowledge that he was young, handsome, beloved, and admired. Then it was that his beauty became, as it were, radiant and brilliant like a ray of sunshine.

The time to see him was when, under the influence of genius, his soul was tormented with the desire of pouring out the numberless ideas and thoughts which flooded his mind: at such moments one scarcely dared approach him, awed, as it were, by the feeling of one's own nothingness in comparison with his greatness. Again, the time to see him was when, coming down from the high regions to which a moment before he had soared, he became once more the simple child adorned with goodness and every grace; taking an interest in all things, as if he were really a child. It was impossible then to refrain from the contemplation of this placid beauty, which, without taking away in the least from the admiration which it inspired, drew one towards him, and made him more accessible to one, and more familiar by lessening a little the distance which separated one from him. But, above all, he should have been seen during the last days of his stay in Italy, when

his soul had to sustain the most cruel blows; when heroism got the better of his affections, of his worldly interests, and even of his love of ease and tranquillity; when his health, already shaken, appeared to fail him each day more and more, to the loss of his intellectual powers. Had one seen him then as we saw him, it would scarcely have been possible to paint him as he looked. Does not genius require genius to be its interpreter? Thorwaldsen alone has, in his marble bust of him, been able to blend the regular beauty of his features with the sublime expression of his countenance. Had the reader seen him, he would have exclaimed with Sir Walter Scott, "that no picture is like him."

Not only would he have observed in his handsome face the denial of all the absurd statements which had been made about him, but he would have noticed a soul greater even than the mind, and superior to the acts which he performed on this earth; he would have read in unmistakeable characters, not only what he was,—a good man,—but the promise of a moral and intellectual perfection ever increasing. If this progressive march towards perfection was at one time arrested by the trials of his life, and by the consequences of undeserved sorrow, it was well proved by his whole conduct towards the end of his life, and in the last poems which he wrote. His poems from year to year assumed a more perfect beauty, and increased constantly, not only in the splendour of their conception, but also in the force of their expressions, and their moral tendency, visible especially in his dramas. In them will be found types surpassing in purity, in delicacy, in grandeur, in heroism,

without ever being untrue to nature, all that ever was conceived by the best poets of England. Shakespeare, in all his master creations, has not conceived a more noble soul than that of Angiolina, or a more tender one than Marina's, or even one more heroic than Myrra's. As his genius became developed, his soul became purified and more perfect. But the Almighty, who does not allow perfection to be of this world, did not permit him to remain on earth, when once he had reached that point. He allowed him, however,—and this perhaps as a compensation for all the injuries which he had suffered,—to die in the prime of life a death worthy of him; the death of a virtuous man, of a hero, of a philosopher.

Excuse this long letter, for if I have ventured to speak to you at such length of the moral, and—may I say the word?—"physical" beauty of the illustrious Englishman, it is because one genius can appreciate another, and that, in speaking of so great a man as Lord Byron, there is no fear of tiring the listeners.

CHAPTER III.

FRENCH PORTRAIT.

"I see that the greater part of the men of my time endeavour to blemish the glory of the generous and fine actions of olden days by giving to them some vile interpretation, or by finding some vain cause or occasion which produced them — very clever, indeed! I shall use a similar licence, and take the same trouble to endeavour to raise these great names."—MONTAIGNE, chap. "Glory."

THE portrait of Lord Byron, in a moral point of view, is still to be drawn. Many causes have conspired to make the task difficult, and the portrait unlike. Physically speaking, on account of his matchless beauty—mentally, owing to his genius—and morally, owing to the rare qualities of his soul, Lord Byron was certainly a phenomenon. The world agrees in this opinion; but is not yet agreed upon the nature and moral value of the phenomenon. But as all phenomena have, besides a primary and extraordinary cause, some secondary and accidental causes, which it is necessary to examine in order that they may be understood; so, to explain Byron's nature, we must not neglect to observe the causes which have contributed chiefly to the formation of his individuality.

His biographers have rather considered the results than the causes.

Even Moore, the best among them, if not, indeed, the only one who can claim the title of biographer, grants that the nature of Lord Byron and its opera-

tions were inexplicable, but does not give himself the trouble to understand them.

Here are his own words:—"So various indeed, and contradictory were his attributes, both moral and intellectual, that he may be pronounced to have been not one, but many: nor would it be any great exaggeration of the truth to say, that out of the mere partition of the properties of his single mind, a plurality of characters, all different and all vigorous, might have been furnished. It was this multiform aspect exhibited by him that led the world, during his short, wondrous career, to compare him with the medley host of personages, almost all differing from each other, which he playfully enumerates in one of his journals.

"The object of so many contradictory comparisons must probably be like something different from them all; but what *that* is, is more than I know, or anybody else."

But, while merely explaining the extraordinary richness of this nature by the analysis of its results, by his changeable character, by the frankness which ever made his heart speak that which it felt, by his excessive sensitiveness, which made him the slave of momentary impressions, by his almost childlike delight and astonishment at things, Moore does not arrive at the true causes of the phenomenon. He registers, it is true, certain effects which become causes when they draw upon the head of Lord Byron certain false judgments, and open the door to every calumny.

Without adopting the system of the influence of races on mankind,—which, if pushed to its extreme

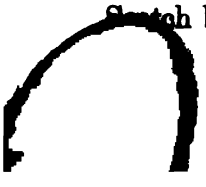
consequences, must lead to the disastrous and deplorable doctrine of fatalism, and would make of man a mere machine,—it is, however, impossible to deny that races and their amalgamation do exercise a great influence over our species.

It is to this very influence of race, which was so evident in Lord Byron, that we attribute, in a measure, the exceptional nature of the great English poet.

As the reader knows, Lord Byron was descended, by his father, from the noble race of the Birons of France. His ancestors accompanied William the Conqueror to England, aided him in the conquest of that country, and distinguished themselves in the various fields of battle which ultimately led to the total subjugation of the island.

In his family, the sympathies of the original race always remained strong.

His father, a youthful and brilliant officer, was never happy except in France. He was very intimate with the Maréchal de Biron, who looked upon him as a connexion. He even settled in Paris with his first wife, the Marchioness of Carmarthen. Soon after his second marriage, he brought his wife over to France, and it was in France that she conceived the future poet. When obliged to return to England to be confined, she was so far advanced in pregnancy that she could not reach London in time, but gave birth to Lord Byron at Dover. It was in France that Byron's father died at thirty-five years of age. Through his mother—a Scotch lady connected with the royal house of Stuart—he had Scotch blood in his veins.



powerful influence exercised by the Norman

Conquest, in the modification of all the old habits of Great Britain, and in making the English that which they now are, has descended as an heirloom to some old aristocratic families of the kingdom, where it discovers itself at different times in different individuals. Nowhere, perhaps, did this influence show itself more clearly than in the person of Lord Byron.

His duplicate or triplicate origin was already visible in the cast of his features. Without any analogy to the type of beauty belonging to the men of his country (a beauty seldom found apart from a kind of cold reserve), Lord Byron's beauty appeared to unite the energy of the western with the splendour and the mildness of the southern climes.

The influence of this mixture of races was equally visible in his moral and intellectual character.

He belonged to the Gallic race (modified by the Latin and Celtic elements) by his vivacity and mobility of character, as well as by his wit and his keen appreciation of the ridiculous, by those smiles and sarcasms which hide or discover a profound philosophy, by his perception of humour without malice, by all those amiable qualities which in the daily intercourse of life made of him a being of such irresistible attraction. He belonged to that race likewise by his great sensitiveness, by his expansive good nature, by his politeness, by his tractableness, by his universal character which rendered every species of success easy to him; by his great generosity, by his love of glory, by his passion for honour, his intuitive perception of great deeds, by a courage which might have appeared rash, had it not been

heroic, and which, in presence of the greatest perils and even of death, ever preserved for him that serenity of mind which allowed him to laugh, even at such times; by his energy, and also by his numerous mental and bodily requirements; and by his defects,—which were, a slight tendency to indiscretion, a want of prudence injurious to his interests, impatience, and a kind of intermittent and apparent fickleness.

He belonged to the western race by his vast intellect, by his practical common sense, which formed the basis of his intellect, and which never allowed him to divorce sublime conceptions from sound sense and good reason,—two qualities, in fact, which so governed his imagination as to make people say he had not any; by the depth of his feelings, the extent of his learning, his passion for independence, his contempt of death, his thirst for the infinite, and by that kind of melancholy which seemed to follow him into the midst of every pleasure. All these various elements, which belonged separately to individuals in France, in England, and in various countries, being united in Lord Byron, produced a kind of anomaly which startled systematic critics, and even honest biographers. The apparent contradiction of all these qualities caused his critics to lose their psychological compass in their estimate of his charming nature, and justice, together with truth, suffered by the result. Thus a portrait, drawn over and over again, still remains to be painted.

The most imaginary portrait, however, of Lord Byron, and certainly the least like him, is that which has general currency in France: not only has that portrait not been drawn from nature, not only is it a

caricature, but it is also a calumny. Those who drew it took romance for history. They charged or exaggerated incidents in his life and peculiarities of his character; thus the harmony of the *tout ensemble* was lost. Ugliness and eccentricity, which amuse, succeeded beauty and truth, which are sometimes wearisome.

Those who knew and loved Lord Byron even more as a man than a genius (and, after all, these are those who knew him personally) suffer by this injustice done to him, and feel the absurdity of making so privileged a being act so whimsical a part, and one so contrary to his nature as well as to the reality of his life.

If this imaginary portrait, however, were more like those which his best biographers have drawn of him, justice to his memory would become so difficult a task as to be almost impossible. Happily it is not so; and those who would conscientiously consult Moore, Parry, and Gamba, must at least, give up the idea that this admirable genius was the eccentric and unamiable being he has been represented. To reach this point would, perhaps, require a greater respect for truth.

Even in France there are many superior persons who, struck by the force of facts, have at times endeavoured to seize certain features which might lead to the discovery of truth, and have attempted to show that Lord Byron's noble character and beauty of soul, as well as his genius, did honour to humanity. But their efforts have been vain in presence of the absurd and contradictory creation of fancy which has been styled "Lord Byron," and

which, with few modifications, continues to be called so to this day.

How has this occurred? what gave rise to it? ignorance, or carelessness? Both causes in France, added to revenge in England, which found its expression in cant,—a species of scourge which is becoming quite the fashion.

The first of these French biographers (I mean of those who have written upon and wished to characterize Lord Byron), without knowing the man they were writing about, set to work with a ready-made Byron. This, no doubt, they found to be an easier method to follow, and one of which the results must prove at least original. But where had they found, and from whose hands did they receive this ready-made poet, whose features they reproduced and offered to the world? Probably from a few lines, not without merit, of Lamartine, who by the aid of his rich imagination had identified Byron with the types which he had conceived for his Oriental poems, mixing up the whole with a heap of calumnies which had just been circulated about him.

Perhaps also from certain critics who believed in the statements of various calumniators, and who themselves had probably not had any better authority than a few articles in badly informed papers, or in newspapers politically opposed to Lord Byron. We all know, by what we see daily in France, how little we can trust the moderation of these, and the justice they render to their adversaries; what must it not have been in England at that time, when passions ran so high?—Perhaps also from the jealousy of

dethroned rivals!—the echoes, perhaps, of the revenge of a woman equally distinguished by her rank and by her talent, but whose passion approached the boundaries of madness, or of the implacable hatred of a few fanatics who, substituting in the most shameless manner their worldly and sectarian interests for the Gospel, denounced him as an atheist because he himself had proclaimed them hypocrites. Finally, perhaps, from a host of absurd rumours, equally odious and vague, caused by his separation from his wife, and by the articles published in newspapers printed at Venice and at Milan.

For Byron's noble, simple, and sublime person was therefore substituted an imaginary being, formed out of these prejudices and these contradictory elements, too outrageous even to be believed, and by dint of sheer malice.

Thus enveloped in a dense atmosphere, which became an obstacle to the disclosure of truth as the clouds are to the rays of the sun, his image only appeared in fantastical outlines borrowed from 'Conrad the Corsair,' or 'Childe Harold,' or 'Lara,' or 'Manfred,' or indeed 'Don Juan.' Analogies were sought which do not exist, and to the poet were attributed the sentiments, and even the acts, of these imaginary beings, albeit without any of the great qualities which constituted his great and noble soul, and which he has not imparted to any of his poetical creations.

Upon him were heaped every possible and most contradictory accusation—of scepticism and pantheism, of deism and atheism, of superstition and enthusiasm, of irony and passion, of sensuality and ideality,

of generosity and avarice. These went to form his portrait, presenting every contrast and every antagonism, which God Himself, the Father and Creator of all things, but also the Author of all harmony, could not have assembled in one and the same being unless He made of him a species of new Frankenstein, incapable of treading the ordinary paths of physical, moral, or intellectual, nay, of the most ordinary existence.

After thus producing such an eccentric character, —the more extraordinary that they entirely forgot to consult the true and most simple history of his life, where if some of the ordinary excusable faults of youth are to be found, "some remarkable qualities, however, must be noticed,"—these wonderful biographers exclaim, astonished as it were at their own conclusions:—"This is indeed a most singular, extraordinary, and not-to-be-defined being!"

I should think so: it is their own work, not the noble, amiable, and sublime mind, the work of God, and which he always exhibited in himself,

"Per far di colassà fede fra noi."—PETRARCH.

Happily, if to paint the portrait of Byron has become impossible, now that

"Poca terra è rimasto il suo belviso,"

it is easy to describe his moral character. His invisible form is, it is true, above, but a conscientious examination of his whole life will give us an idea of it. He knew this so well himself, that a few days before his death he begged, as a favour, of his friend Lord Harrington, then Colonel Stan-

hope, at Missolonghi, to judge him only by his deeds. "Judge me by my deeds."

All bombastic expressions, all systematic views should be discarded, and attention paid only to facts, in order to discover the fine intellectual figure of Lord Byron so completely lost sight of by his detractors.

Since the imaginary creations of his pen in moments of exalted passion should not be taken as the real manifestation of his character, the latter is to be found in his own deeds, and in the testimony of those who knew him personally. Herein shall we seek truth by which we are to deal with the fanciful statements which have too long been received as facts. Let us consider the opinions of those who by their authority have a right to portray him, whilst we study the various causes which have contributed to lead the public into errors which time has nearly consecrated, but which shall be corrected in France, and indeed in every country where passion and animosity have no interest in maintaining them.

"Public opinion," says M. Cousin, "has its errors, but these cannot be of long duration." They lasted a long time, however, as regards Lord Byron; but, thanks to God, they will not be eternal. He depended upon this himself, for he once at Ravenna wrote these prophetic words in a memorandum:—

"Never mind the wicked, who have ever persecuted me with the help of Lady Byron: triumphant justice will be done to me when the hand which writes this is as cold as the hearts that have wounded me."

In England, Lord Byron triumphed over many jealous enemies whom his first satire earned for him, no less than the rapid and wonderful rise of his genius, which, instead of appearing by degrees, burst forth at once, as it were, and towering over many established reputations. The prestige which he acquired was such that every obstacle was surmounted, and in one day he saw himself raised against his will, and without his having ever sought the honour, to the highest pinnacle of fashion and literary fame.

In a country where success is all, his enemies, and those who were jealous of his name, were obliged to fall back; but they did not give up their weapons nor their spite. One curious element was introduced in the national veneration for the poet. It was agreed that never had such an accumulation of various gifts been heaped upon the head of one man: he was to be revered and honoured, but on one condition. He was to be a mysterious being whose genius should not transgress the boundaries of the East; who was to allow himself to be identified with the imaginary beings of his own fancy, however disagreeable, nay, even criminal they might be in reality. True, his personal conduct (at twenty-four) was to be above all human weakness; if not, he was to be treated, as certain superstitious votaries treat their idols if they do not obtain at once the miracles they ask for. His secret enemies perfidiously made use of these stupid demands of the public.

Insinuating and giving out at times one calumny after another, they always kept behind the scenes,

resolved, however, to ruin him in the public esteem on the first opportunity, which they knew they would not have long to wait for from one so open, so passionate, so generous as Lord Byron. The greatest misfortune of his life—his marriage—gave them their opportunity. Then they came forth, threw down the mask which they had hitherto worn, to put on one more hideous still; overturned the statue from the pedestal upon which the public had raised it, and tried to mutilate its remains. But as the stuff of which it was made was a marble which could not be broken, they only defiled, insulted, and outlawed it.

Then it was that France made acquaintance with Lord Byron. She saw him first mysteriously enveloped in the romantic semblance of a Corsair, of a sceptical Harold, of a young lord who had despised and wounded his mother country, from which he had almost been obliged to exile himself, in consequence of a series of eccentricities, faults, and—who knows?—of crimes, perhaps. Thus caught in a perfidious net, Lord Byron left England for Switzerland.

He found Shelley, whom he only knew by name, at Geneva, where he stopped. Shelley was another victim of English fanatical and intolerant opinions; but he, it may be allowed at least, had given cause for this by some reprehensible writings, in which he had declared himself an atheist. No allowance had been made for his youth, for he was only seventeen when he wrote 'Queen Mab,' and he found himself expelled not only from the university but also from his home, which was to him a real cause of sorrow and misfortune.

Between these two great minds there existed a wide gulf—that which exists between pantheism and spiritualism; but they had one great point of resemblance, their mutual passionate love for justice and humanity, their hatred of cant and hypocrisy, in fact, all the elevated sentiments of the moral and social man. With Lord Byron these noble dispositions of the heart and mind were naturally the consequence of his tastes and opinions, which were essentially spiritualistic. With Shelley, though in contradiction with his metaphysics, they were notwithstanding in harmony with the beautiful sentiments of his soul, which, when he was only twenty-three years of age, had already experienced the unkindness of man. Their respective souls, wounded and hurt by the perfidiousness and injustice of the world, felt themselves attracted to each other. A real friendship sprang up between them. They saw one another often, and it was in the conversations which they held together at this time that the seed was sown which shortly was to produce the works of genius which were to see the day at the foot of the Alps and under the blue sky of Italy.

Although Lord Byron's heart was mortally wounded, still no feeling of hatred could find its way into it. The sorrow which he felt, the painful knowledge which he had of cruel and perfidious wrongs done to him, the pain of finding out the timidity of character of his friends, and the recollection of the many ungrateful people of whom he was the victim, all and each of these sentiments found their echo in the 'Prisoner of Chillon,' in the third canto of 'Childe Harold,' in 'Manfred,' in the

pathetic stanzas addressed to his sister, in the admirable and sublime monody on the death of Sheridan, and in the 'Dream,' which, according to Moore, he must have written whilst shedding many bitter tears. According to the same authority, the latter poem is the most melancholy and pathetic history that ever came forth from human pen.

I shall not mention here the persecution to which Byron was subjected then, nor the ever-manly, dignified, but heartrending words which it drew forth from the noble poet in the midst of his retired, studious, regular, and virtuous existence. I shall speak of it elsewhere; but I will say now that so unexampled, atrocious, and foolish was this persecution, that his enemies must have feared the awakening of the public conscience and the effects of a reaction, which might make them lose all the fruits of their victory, if they tarried in their efforts to prevent it. The most cruel among them was the poet laureate, in whose eyes Byron could have had but one defect—that of being superior to him. True, Byron had mentioned him in the famous satire which was the work of his youth; but he had most generously expiated his crime by confessing it, in buying up the fifth edition so as to annihilate it, and by declaring that he would have willingly suppressed even the memory of it. This noble action had gained for him the forgiveness and even the friendship of the most generous among them; but the revengeful poet laureate was not, as Byron said, "of those who forgive."

This man arrived at Geneva, and at once set about his hateful work of revenge. This was all the easier

on account of the spirit of cant which reigned in that country, and owing to the intimacy which he found to be existing between Byron and Shelley, for whom likewise he had conceived a malignant hatred. It must be said, however, that the laureate having to account for, amongst other works, his 'Wat Tyler' (which had been pronounced to be an immoral book, and had been prohibited on that account), rather trusted to his hypocrisy to regain for him the former credit he enjoyed.

The intimacy between Byron and the spurned atheist Shelley presented a capital opportunity for this man to take his revenge. He circulated in Geneva all the false reports which had been current in London, and described Byron under the worst colours. Switzerland was at that time overrun by the English, whom the recently-signed Peace had attracted to the Continent. The laureate took the lead of those who tried to make the good but bigoted people of Geneva believe in all the tittle-tattle against Byron which was passed about in London, and actually attempted to make a scandal of his very presence in their town. When he passed in the streets they stopped to stare at him insolently, putting up their glasses to their eyes. They followed him in his rides; they reported that he was seducing all the girls in the "Rue Basse," and, in fact, although his life was perfectly virtuous, one would have said that his presence was a contagion. Having found in a travellers' register the name of Shelley, accompanied by the qualification of "atheist!" which Byron had amiably struck out with his

pen, the laureate caught at this and gave out that the two friends had declared themselves to be atheists. He attributed their friendship to infamous motives; he spoke of incest and of other abominations, so odious that Byron's friends deemed it prudent not to speak to him a word of all this at the time. He only learnt it at Venice later.*

* When political events obliged Count Gamba to quit Romagna, he thought at first of going with his family to take up his abode at Geneva.

Lord Byron, on learning this, through a letter from the Countess Guiccioli, who had rejoined her family at Florence, disapproved of their design, and begged Shelley—then on a visit to him at Ravenna—to express for him his disapprobation, and state the reasons of it. Shelley addressed the following letter in Italian to the Countess, and the project was abandoned:—

"MADAM,—At the request of my friend, Lord Byron, I consider it my duty to offer you some considerations relative to the purposed journey to Geneva, so as to give you an idea of the undesirable results likely to follow. I flatter myself that you will accept this request of his, together with the motives leading me to acquiesce, as an excuse for the liberty taken by a total stranger. In acting thus, the sole object I have in view is my friend's peace of mind, and that of those in whom he is so deeply interested. I have no other motive, nor can entertain any other; and let it suffice, in proof of my perfect sincerity, to assure you that I also have suffered from an intolerant clergy at home, and from tyranny, and that I, like your family, have met with persecution and calumny as my sole reward for love of country.

"Allow me, madam, to state the reasons for which it seems to me that Geneva would not be an appropriate residence for your family. Your circumstances offer some analogy with those existing between my family and Lord Byron in the summer of 1816. Our dwellings were close together; our mode of life was quiet and retired; it would be impossible to imagine an existence simpler than ours, less calculated to draw down the aspersions cast upon us.

"These calumnies were of the most unheard-of nature,—really too infamous to permit us to treat them with disdain. Both Genevans and English established at Geneva affirmed that we were leading a life of the most unblushing profligacy. They said that we had made a compact together for outraging all held most sacred in human society. Pardon me, madam, if I spare you the details. I will only say that *incest*, *atheism*, and many other things equally ridiculous or horrible, were imputed to us. The

Loaded with this very creditable amount of falsehoods, most of which were believed in Geneva, the English newspapers were not slow in propagating the scandal, and the nation lent entire faith.

"Hardly any mode of annoying us was neglected. Persons living on the borders of the lake opposite Lord Byron's house made use of telescopes to spy out all his movements. An English lady fainted, or pretended to faint, with horror on seeing him enter a saloon. The most outrageous caricatures of him and his friends were circulated; and all this took place in the short period of three months.

"The effect of this, on Lord Byron's mind, was most unhappy. His natural gaiety abandoned him almost entirely. A man must be more or less than a stoic to bear such injuries with patience.

"Do not flatter yourself, madam, with the idea, that because Englishmen acknowledge Lord Byron as the greatest poet of the day, they would therefore abstain from annoying him, and, as far as it depended on them, from persecuting him. Their admiration for his works is unwillingly extorted, and the pleasure they experience in reading them does not allay prejudice nor stop calumny.

"As to the Genevans, they would not disturb him, if there were not a colony of English established in the town,—persons who have carried with them a host of mean prejudices and hatred against all those who excel or avoid them; and as these causes would continue to exist, the same effects would doubtless follow.

"The English are about as numerous at Geneva as the natives, and their riches cause them to be sought after; for the Genevans, compared to their guests, are like valets, or, at best, like hotel-keepers, having let their whole town to foreigners.

"A circumstance, personally known to me, may afford proof of what is to be expected at Geneva. The only inhabitant on whose attachment and honour Lord Byron thought he had every reason to count, turned out one of those who invented the most infamous calumnies. A friend of mine, deceived by him, involuntarily unveiled all his wickedness to me, and I was therefore obliged to inform my friend of the hypocrisy and perversity we had discovered in this individual. You cannot, madam, conceive the excessive violence with which Englishmen, of a certain class, detest those whose conduct and opinions are not exactly framed on the model of their own. This system of ideas forms a superstition unceasingly demanding victims, and unceasingly finding them. But, however strong theological hatred may be amongst them, it yields in intensity to social hatred. This system is quite the order of the day at Geneva; and, having once been brought into play for the disquiet of Lord Byron and his friends, I much fear that the same causes would soon produce the same effects, if the intended journey took place. Accustomed as you are, madam, to the gentler manners of Italy, you will scarcely be able to conceive to what a

laureate returned to London to spread them in England, so as to prevent the effects of the beautiful and touching poems which were poured forth from the great and wounded soul of Byron, and which might have restored him to the esteem of all the honest and just minds of his country.

Meanwhile Lady C. L., having failed to discover any one who would accept the reward she offered to the person who would take Byron's life, had recourse to another means of injuring him—to a kind of moral assassination—which she effected by the publication of her revengeful sentiments in the three volumes entitled 'Glenarvon.' Such a work might justify a biographer in passing it over with contempt without even mentioning it; but as enemies of Lord Byron have made capital out of this book,—as it found credence even with some superior minds, such as Goethe's,—as the intimacy which prefaced this revenge caused great sensation all over England, and was a source of continual vexation and pain for Byron—it must not be passed over without comment, as Moore did to spare the susceptibility of living personages.

pitch this social hatred is carried in less favoured regions. I have been forced to pass through this hard experience, and to see all dearest to me entangled in inextricable slanders. My position bore some resemblance to that of your brother, and it is for that reason I hasten to write you, in order to spare you and your family the evil I so fatally experienced. I refrain from adding other reasons, and I pray you to excuse the freedom with which I have written, since it is dictated by sincerest motives, and justified by my friend's request. To him I leave the care of assuring you of my devotion to his interests, and to all those dear to him.

"Deign, madam, to accept the expression of my highest esteem.

"Your sincere and humble servant.

"PERCY B. SHELLEY.

"P.S.—You will forgive a barbarian, madam, for the bad Italian in which the honest sentiments of his letter are couched."

Lady C. L—— (afterwards Lady M——) belonged to the high aristocracy of England. Young, clever, and fashionable, but a little eccentric, she had been married some years when she fell so desperately in love with Lord Byron that she braved everything for him. It was not Byron who made the first advances, for his powers of seduction were only the attractions with which nature had endowed him. His person, his voice, his look,—all in him was irresistible. In presenting himself anywhere, he could very well say with Shakespeare, in 'Othello,'—

"This only is the witchcraft I have used."

Lord Byron, who was then only twenty-three years of age, and not married, was flattered, and more than pleased, by this preference shown to him. Although Lady C. L——'s beauty was not particularly attractive to him, and although her character was exactly opposite to the ideal which he had formed of what woman's character should be, yet she contrived to interest him, to captivate him by the power of her love, and in a very short time to persuade him that he loved her.

This sort of love could not last. It was destined to end in a catastrophe. Lady L——'s jealousy was ridiculous. Dressed sometimes as a page, sometimes in another costume, she was wont to follow him by means of these disguises. She quarrelled and played the heroine, &c. Byron, who disliked quarrels of all kinds (and perhaps even the lady herself), besides being intimate with all her family, was too much the sufferer by this conduct not to endeavour to bring her back to a sense of reason and of her duty. He was

indulging in the hope that he had succeeded in these endeavours when, at a ball given by Lady Heathcote, Lady L——, after vain efforts to attract Byron's attention, went up to him and asked him whether she might waltz. Byron replied, half-absently, that he saw no reason why she should not; upon which her pride and her passion became so excited that she seized hold of a knife, and feigned to commit suicide. The ball was at once at an end, and all London was soon filled with accounts of this incident. Lady L—— had scarcely recovered from the slight wound she had inflicted on herself, when she wrote to a young peer, and made him all kinds of extravagant promises, if he would consent to call out Byron and kill him. This, however, did not prevent her calling again upon Lord Byron, not, however, says Medwin, with the intention of blowing his brains out; as he was not at home, she wrote on one of his books

"Remember me."

On returning home, Byron read what she had written, and, filled with disgust and indignation, he wrote the famous lines

"Remember thee! Ay, doubt it not,"

and sent her back several of her letters sealed up. 'Glenarvon' was her revenge. She painted Byron in fiendish colours, giving herself all the qualities he possessed, so as to appear an angel, and to him all the passions of the 'Giaour,' of the 'Corsair,' and of 'Childe Harold,' so that he might be taken for a demon.

In this novel, the result of revenge, truth asserts its rights, notwithstanding all the contradictions of which the book is full. Thus Lady L—— cannot help

depicting Byron under some of his real characteristics. She was asked, for instance, what she thought of him, when she met him for the first time after hearing of his great reputation, and she answers, whilst gazing at the soft loveliness of his smile,—

"What do I think? I think that never did the hand of God imprint upon a human form so lovely, so glorious an expression."

And further she adds:—

"Never did the sculptor's hand, in the sublimest product of his talent, imagine a form and a face so exquisite, so full of animation or so varied in expression. Can one see him without being moved? Oh! is there in the nature of woman the possibility of listening to him, without cherishing every word he utters? and having listened to him once, is it possible for any human heart ever to forget those accents which awaken every sentiment and calm every fear?"

Again:—

"Oh better far to have died than to see or listen to Glenarvon. When he smiled, his smile was like the light of heaven; his voice was more soothing from its softness thán the softest music. In his manner there was such a charm, that it would have been vain to affect even to be offended by its sweetness."

But whilst she was obliged to obey the voice of passion and of truth, she took on the other hand as a motto to her novel that of the 'Corsair,' which even applied to the 'Corsair' is not altogether just, for he was gifted with more than "one virtue:—"

> "He left a Corsair's name to other times,
> Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes."

It is, however, fair to add, that this revenge became

the punishment of the heroine; she never again found any rest, struggled against a troubled mind, and never succeeded in forgetting her love. It is even said that, diseased in mind and body, she was one day walking along one of the alleys of her beautiful place, on the road to Newstead Abbey, when she saw a funeral procession coming up the road in the direction of Newstead. Having inquired whose funeral it was, and being told it was that of the great poet, whose mortal remains were being conveyed to their last resting-place, she fainted, and died a few days afterwards. His name was the last word she uttered, and this she did with love and despair. In London, and wherever the authoress was known, the book had no success, but the case was different abroad and in the provinces.

Attracted as he always was towards all that is good, great, and sincere, Byron was wont to break the monotony of his retired life in the villa Diodati by frequent visits to Madame de Staël at her country-seat, "Coppet." She was the first who mentioned 'Glenarvon' to him, and when Murray wrote to him on the subject, Byron simply replied,—

"Of Glenarvon, Madame de Staël told me (ten days ago at Coppet) marvellous and grievous things; but I have seen nothing of it but the motto, which promises amiably 'for us and for our tragedy' . . . 'a name to all succeeding,' &c. The generous moment selected for the publication is probably its kindest accompaniment, and, truth to say, the time *was* well chosen." *

"I have not even a guess at its contents," said

* Moore, vol. ii. p. 8.

he, and he really attached no importance to its publication. But a few days later he had a proof of the bad effect which its appearance had produced, for all this venom against him had so poisoned the mind of a poor old woman of sixty-three, an authoress, that on Lord Byron entering Madame de Staël's drawing-room one afternoon, she fainted, or feigned to do so. Poor soul! a writer of novels herself, and probably most partial to such reading, she had, no doubt, from the perusal of 'Glenarvon' gleaned the idea that she had before her eyes that hideous monster of seduction and perpetrator of crimes who was therein depicted!

At last Lord Byron read this too famous novel, and wrote to Moore as follows on the subject:—

"Madame de Staël lent me 'Glenarvon' last autumn. It seems to me that if the author had written the truth, and nothing but the truth, and the whole truth, the novel might not only have been more romantic but more amusing. As for the likeness, it cannot be good, I did not sit long enough for it."

From Venice Byron wrote as follows to Murray, in consequence of a series of articles which appeared in Germany, where a serious view had been taken of the novel of 'Glenarvon':—

"An Italian translation of 'Glenarvon' was lately printed at Venice. The Censor (Sgr. Petrolini) refused to sanction the publication till he had seen me on the subject. I told him that I did not recognise the slightest relation between that book and myself; but that, whatever opinions might be held on that subject, I would never prevent or oppose the publication of any book in any language, on my own private account, and desired him (against his

inclination) to permit the poor translator to publish his labours. It is going forward in consequence. You may say this, with my compliments, to the author." *

Madame de Staël had a great affection for Lord Byron, but his detractors had found their way into her house.† Among these was a distinguished lawyer, who had never been injured by any speech or word of Lord Byron, but who, setting himself up as an amateur enemy of the poet, had, under an anonymous designation, been one of his bitterest detractors in the 'Edinburgh Review,' on the occasion of the publication of his early poems. This same lawyer endeavoured to gain Madame de Staël over to his opinion of Byron's merit, probably on account of the very knowledge that he had of the harm he had done him; hatred, like nobility, has its obligations.

* When that extravagant book 'Glenarvon' appeared, Moore wrote a comic review on it, and sent the paper to Jeffrey, who thought it a good caricature, and wanted to publish it in the 'Edinburgh Review.' But the friends of the author of 'Glenarvon' interfered to such purpose that Jeffrey gave up the idea of mentioning the novel at all, which was also approved by Lord Byron's friends as the best means of proving, by silence, the contempt such a book merited.

† Madame de Staël said one day at Coppet, with an air of mystery, "You are often seen at night, Lord Byron, in your bark upon the lake, accompanied by a white phantom." "Yes," answered he, "'tis my dog." Madame de Staël shook her head, not at all convinced that he kept such innocent company, for her head had been filled with fantastic tales and lies about him. In this instance, however, she was somewhat right; for the white phantom was not only his dog, but often Mrs. Shelley, and even sometimes a young woman intimate with her. This lady, with whom he had, and would have, nothing to do, was bent on running after him, although he did all in his power to avoid her. She succeeded sometimes in getting into the boat with the Shelleys, and thus made inquisitive people talk. But Lord Byron was very innocent in it all, and even victimised, for the *ennui* it caused him made him quit Switzerland and the Alps, he loved so well, before the season was even over.

But Madame de Staël, who, on reading 'Farewell,' was wont to say that she wished almost she had been as unfortunate as Lady Byron, was too elevated in mind and too noble in character to listen quietly to the abuse of Byron in which his enemies indulged. She, however, tried to induce Lord Byron to become reconciled to his wife, on the ground that one should never struggle against the current of public opinion. Madame de Staël actually succeeded in obtaining his permission to endeavour to effect this reconciliation; but the lawyer before mentioned used every argument to prevent her pursuing this project of mediation.

Lord Byron's biographers have told how Lady Byron received this proposal; which, after the way in which he had been treated, appears to have been, on the part of Byron, an act of almost superhuman generosity. Such an offer should have moved any being gifted with a heart and a soul. But I will not here speak of her refusal and of its consequences; all I wish to state is, that the calumnies put forward against him being too absurd for Byron to condescend to notice, assumed a degree of consistency which deceived the public, and even made dupes of superior men, who in their turn contributed to make dupes of others. At this time, then, when the war and the continental blockade were at an end, when each and every one came pouring on to the continent, did the star of Byron begin to shine on the European horizon; but, instead of appearing as a sublime and bountiful star, it appeared surrounded by dark and ominous clouds.

Lamartine, who was then travelling in Switzerland,

was able to find in this sad state of things materials for his fine poem 'Meditation,' and for doubts whether Byron was "an angel or a demon," according to the manner in which he was viewed, be it as a poet or as a man; and, as if all this were not enough, a host of bad writings were attributed to his pen, which brought forth the following expressions in a letter to Murray, his publisher:—

"I had hoped that some other lie would have replaced and succeeded to the thousand and one falsehoods amassed during the winter. I can forgive all that is said of or against me, but not what I am made to say or sing under my own name. I have quite enough to answer for my own writings. It would be too much even for Job to bear what he has not said. I believe that the Arabian patriarch, when he wished his enemies had written a book, did not go so far as to be willing to sign his name on the first page."

But the public mind was so disposed to look at Byron in the light of a demon, as traced by Lamartine, that when some young scattered-brain youth published out of vanity, or perhaps for speculative motives, another monstrous invention, in the hope of passing it off as a work of Byron, he actually succeeded for some time in his object without being discovered.

"Strange destiny both of books and their authors!" exclaims the writer of the 'Essai sur Lord Byron,' published in 1823,—"an evidently apocryphal production, which was at once seen not to be genuine by all persons of taste, notwithstanding the forgery of the title, has contributed as much to make Byron known in France as have his best poems. A certain P——

had impudence enough to attribute indirectly to the noble lord himself the absurd and disgusting tale of the 'Vampire,' which Galignani, in Paris, hastened to publish as an acknowledged work of Byron. Upon this Lord Byron hastened to remonstrate with Messieurs Galignani; but unfortunately too late, and after the reputation of the book was already widespread. Our theatres appropriated the subject, and the story of Lord Ruthven swelled into two volumes which created some sensation." *

Goethe also believed the novels to be true stories, and was especially impressed with 'Glenarvon.' † It is reported that he became jealous of Byron on the appearance of the poem of 'Manfred.' If he were not, it is at least certain that the pagan patriarch never could sympathise with the new generation of Christian geniuses.

On the 7th of June, however, of the year 1820, Byron writes as follows to Murray, from Ravenna:—

"Enclosed is something which will interest you, to wit, the opinion of the greatest man of Germany, perhaps of Europe, upon one of the great men of your advertisements (all 'famous hands,' as Jacob Tonson used to say of his ragamuffins)—in short, a critique of Goethe's upon 'Manfred.' There is the original, an English translation, and an Italian one;

* 'Essai sur Lord Byron,' p. 177.

† Lord Byron wrote to Moore in November, 1820:—

"Pray, where did you get hold of Goethe's 'Florentine' husband-killing story? Upon such matters, in general, I may say, with Beau Clinker, in reply to Erraud's wife:—

"'Oh, the villain, he hath murdered my poor Timothy!'

"*Clinker.*—'Damn your Timothy! I tell you, woman, your husband has murdered me—he has carried away my fine jubilee clothes.'"

keep them all in your archives, for the opinions of such a man as Goethe, whether favourable or not, are always interesting; and this more so, as being favourable. His 'Faust' I never read, for I don't know German; but Matthew Monk Lewis, in 1816, at Geneva, translated most of it to me *vivâ voce*, and I was naturally much struck with it; but it was the 'Steinbach,' and the 'Yungfrau,' and something else, much more than 'Faustus,' that made me write 'Manfred.' The first scene, however, and that of 'Faustus' are very similar."

One can scarcely conceive how so great a mind as that of Goethe could have been duped by such mystifications. And yet this is what he wrote at that time in a German paper relative to Byron's 'Manfred':—

"We find in this tragedy the quintessence of the most astonishing talent born to be its own tormentor. The character of Lord Byron's life and poetry hardly permits a just and equitable appreciation. He has often enough confessed what it is that torments him. He has repeatedly portrayed it, and scarcely any one feels compassion for this intolerable suffering over which he is ever laboriously ruminating. There are, properly speaking, two females whose phantoms for ever haunt him, and which, in this piece also, perform principal parts, one under the name of Astarte, the other without form or actual presence, and merely a voice. Of the horrid occurrence which took place with the former the following is related. When a bold and enterprising young man, he won the affections of a Florentine lady. Her husband discovered the amour, and

murdered his wife; but the murderer was the same night found dead in the street, and there was no one to whom any suspicion could be attached. Lord Byron removed from Florence, and these spirits haunted him all his life after.

"This romantic incident is rendered highly probable by innumerable allusions to it in his poems."

And Moore adds:—"The grave confidence with which the venerable critic traces the fancies of his brother poet to real persons and events, making no difficulty even of a double murder at Florence, to furnish grounds for his theory, affords an amusing instance of the disposition, so prevalent throughout Europe, to picture Byron as a man full of marvels and mysteries, as well in his life as his poetry. To these exaggerated or wholly false notions of him, the numerous fictions palmed upon the world, of his romantic tours and wonderful adventures in places he never saw, and with persons who never existed, have, no doubt, considerably contributed, and the consequence is, so utterly out of truth and nature are the representations of his life and character long current upon the Continent, that it may be questioned whether the real 'flesh and blood' hero of these pages (the social, practical-minded, and, with all his faults and eccentricities, English Lord Byron) may not, to the over-exalted imaginations of most of his foreign admirers, appear only an ordinary, unromantic, and prosaic personage."

Then, quoting some of the falsehoods which were spread everywhere about Byron, Moore says:—

"Of this kind are the accounts, filled with all sorts of circumstantial wonders, of his residence in the

island of Mytilene; his voyages to Sicily, to Ithaca, with the Countess Guiccioli, &c. But the most absurd, perhaps, of all these fabrications are the stories told by Pouqueville, of the poet's religious conferences in the cell of Father Paul, at Athens; and the still more unconscionable fiction in which Rizo has indulged, in giving the details of a pretended theatrical scene, got up (according to this poetical historian) between Lord Byron and the Archbishop of Arta, at the tomb of Botzaris, at Missolonghi."

As the numerous causes which led to the false judgment of Byron's true character never ceased to exist during his lifetime, one consequence has been that those who never knew him have never been able to arrive at the truth of matters concerning him. The contrast which existed between the real and imaginary personage was such as to cause the greatest astonishment to all those who, having hitherto adopted the received notions about him, at last came to know him at Ravenna, at Pisa, at Genoa, and in Greece, up to the very last days of his life. But, before quoting some of these fortunate travellers, I must transcribe a few more passages from Moore:—

"On my rejoining him in town this spring, I found the enthusiasm about his writings and himself, which I had left so prevalent, both in the world of literature and society, grown, if anything, still more genuine and intense. In the immediate circle perhaps around him, familiarity of intercourse must have begun to produce its usual disenchanting effect."

"His own liveliness and unreserve, on a more intimate acquaintance, would not be long in dispelling that charm of poetic sadness, which to the eyes of distant observers hung about him; while the romantic notions, connected by some of his fair readers with those past and nameless loves alluded to in his poems, ran some risk of abatement from too near an acquaintance with the supposed objects of his fancy and fondness at present."

"But, whatever of its first romantic impression the personal character of the poet may, from such causes, have lost in the circle he most frequented, this disappointment of the imagination was far more than compensated by the frank, social, and engaging qualities, both of disposition and manner, which, on a nearer intercourse, he disclosed, as well as by that entire absence of any literary assumption or pedantry, which entitled him fully to the praise bestowed by Sprat upon Cowley—that few could ever discover he was a great poet by his discourse."

While thus, by his friends, he was seen in his true colours, in his weakness and in his strength, to strangers, and such as were out of this immediate circle, the sternness of his imaginary personages were, by the greater number of them, supposed to belong, not only as regarded mind, but manners, to himself. So prevalent and persevering has been this notion, that, in some disquisitions on his character published since his death, and containing otherwise many just and striking views, we find, in the portrait drawn of him, such features as the following:—"Lord Byron had a

stern, direct, severe mind: a sarcastic, disdainful, gloomy temper. He had no sympathy with a flippant cheerfulness: upon the surface was sourness, discontent, displeasure, ill-will. Of this sort of double aspect which he presented, the aspect in which he was viewed by the world and by his friends, he was himself fully aware; and it not only amused him, but indeed, to a certain extent, flattered his pride."

"And if there was ever any tendency to derangement in his mental conformation, on this point alone could it be pronounced to have manifested itself. In the early part of my acquaintance with him, when he most gave way to this humour, I have known him more than once, as we have sat together after dinner, to fall seriously into this sort of dark and self-accusing mood, and throw out hints of his past life with an air of gloom and mystery designed evidently to awaken curiosity and interest . . . . It has sometimes occurred to me that the occult cause of his lady's separation from him, round which herself and her legal adviser have thrown such formidable mystery, may have been nothing more, after all, than some imposture of this kind, intended only to mystify and surprise, while it was taken in sober seriousness."

I have mentioned elsewhere how Moore, whilst justly appreciating the consequences of this youthful eccentricity,—of which later, but too late, Byron corrected himself,—does not equally appreciate the motives, or rather the principal motive, which gave rise to it. As, however, he judges rightly of the

results, I shall continue to quote him for the reader's benefit.

"M. Galignani, having expressed a wish to be furnished with a short memoir of Lord Byron for the purpose of prefixing it to the French edition of his works, I had said jestingly, in a preceding letter to his lordship, that it would but be a fair satire on the disposition of the world to 'remonster his features' if he would write for the public, English as well as French, a sort of mock heroic account of himself, outdoing in horrors and wonders all that had been yet related or believed of him, and leaving even Goethe's story of the double murder at Florence far behind."

Lord Byron replied from Pisa, on the 12th of December, 1821: — "What you say about Galignani's two biographies is very amusing; and, if I were not lazy, I would certainly do what you desire. But I doubt my present stock of facetiousness—that is, of good serious humour—so as not to let the cat out of the bag. I wish you would undertake it. I will forgive and *indulge* you (like a pope) beforehand, for anything ludicrous that might keep those fools in their own dear belief that a man is a *loup-garou*.

"I suppose I told you that the 'Giaour' story had actually some foundation in fact. . . I should not like marvels to rest upon any account of my own, and shall say nothing about it. . . The worst of any real adventures is that they involve living people."

He at last tired of always appearing in the guise of a corsair, or of a mysterious criminal, or of a hero of melodrama. These various disguises had

afforded him too much pain, and one day he said to Mr. Medwin :—

"When Galignani thought of publishing a fresh edition of my works, he wrote to Moore to ask him to give him some anecdotes respecting me: and we thought of composing a narrative filled with the most impossible and incredible adventures, to amuse the Parisians. But I reflected that there were already too many ready-made stories about me, to puzzle my brain to invent new ones."

Mr. Medwin adds :—

"The reader will laugh when he hears that one of my friends assured me that the lines to Thyrza, published with the first canto to 'Childe Harold,' were addressed by Byron to his bear! There is nothing too wicked to be invented by hatred, or believed by ignorance."

Moore often refers to the wonderful contrast which existed between the real and imaginary Byron. Thus, in speaking of his incredibly active and sublime genius at Venice, he says :—

"While thus at this period, more remarkably than at any other during his life, the unparalleled versatility of his genius was unfolding itself, those quick, chameleon-like changes of which his character, too, was capable, were, during the same time, most vividly and in strongest contrast, drawn out. To the world, and more especially to England,—the scene at once of his glories and his wrongs,—he presented himself in no other aspect than that of a stern, haughty misanthrope, self-banished from the fellowship of men, and most of all from that of Englishmen." . . . . .

How totally all this differed from the Byron of the social hour, they who lived in familiar intercourse with him may be safely left to tell. The reputation which he had acquired for himself abroad, prevented numbers, of course, of his countrymen, whom he would most cordially have welcomed, from seeking his acquaintance. But as it was, no "English gentleman ever approached him, with the common forms of introduction, that did not come away at once surprised and charmed by the kind courtesy and facility of his manners, the unpretending play of his conversation, and, on a nearer intercourse, the frank youthful spirits, to the flow of which he gave way with such a zest as even to deceive some of those who best knew him into the impression that gaiety was, after all, the true bent of his disposition."

I must confine myself to these quotations, as it is not in my power to reproduce all that Moore has said on the subject. His statements, however, prove two things:—

First, that Lord Byron, instead of being a dark and gloomy hero of romance, was a man full of amiability, goodness, grace, sociability, and liveliness. Of the impression produced upon all those who knew him in these combined qualities, I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

Secondly, that since even after Byron's death the fantastical notions about him were entertained even by so impartial and so enlightened a person as Sir Edward Brydges, it is not surprising (nor should they be blamed for it) that Frenchmen, and all foreigners in general, and even a great portion of

Englishmen, should have believed in this fallacy. There was no means at that time of clearing up the mystery, nor can one see in this belief, however exaggerated, especially in France and on the Continent, any spirit either of direct hostility, or even ill-will towards him. The error was exported from England, and upon it they reasoned, logically and oftentimes wittily. But surely those cannot be absolved who still adhered to the old errors, after the true state of things had been disclosed at the poet's death in the writings of such biographers as Moore, Parry, Medwin himself, Count Gamba, and others who knew Byron personally.

That a portion of the British public should maintain certain prejudices, and preserve a certain animosity against Byron, is not matter of astonishment to those who have at all studied the English character. The spirit of tolerance which exists in the laws, is far from pervading the habits of the people; cant is on the decrease, but not quite gone, and may still lead one to a very fair social position. There still live a host of enemies whom Byron had made during his lifetime, and the number of whom (owing to a bonâ fide treachery, by the indiscreet publication of a correspondence which was destined to be kept secret and in the dark), increased greatly after his death from the number of people whose pride he had therein wounded.

He may be liable to the punishment due to his having trespassed on certain exclusively English notions of virtue, as intimated in the condemnation of the *imaginary* immorality of some of his works. He

may be accused, with some truth, of having been too severe towards several persons and things. But not one of these reasons has any *locus standi* in France, —a country which might claim a certain share in the honour of having been his mother country. Besides having a French turn of mind in many respects, Byron, descended directly from a French stock, had been conceived in France, and had long lived in its neighbourhood. If those, therefore, may be absolved who falsely appreciated Byron's character both before and immediately after his death, the same indulgence cannot be extended to those who persist in their unjust conclusions. Such men were greatly to blame; for, in writing about Byron, they were bound in conscience to consult the biographers who had known him, and having neglected to do so, either from idleness or from party spirit, they failed in their duty as just and honourable men.

Before finishing this chapter, we must add to these pages, which were written many years ago, a few remarks suggested by the perusal of a recent work which has caused great sensation by the talent which pervades it, by its boldness, and original writing. I allude to the work of M. Taine upon English literature; therein he appreciates, in a manly, fine style, all the loftiness of Lord Byron's poetry, but always under the influence of a received, and not self-formed, opinion. He likewise deserves, by his appreciations and conclusions, the reproaches addressed to the other critics of the illustrious and calumniated poet. In this work, which is rather magnificent than solid, and which contains a whole psychological system,

one note is ever uppermost,—that of disdain. Contempt, however, is not his object, but only his means. All must be sacrificed to the triumph of his opinions.

The glory of nations, great souls, great minds, their works, their deeds, all must serve to complement his victory. Bossuet, Newton, Dante, Shakespeare, Corneille, Byron, all have erred. If he despises them, if he blames them, it is only to show that they have not been able to discover the logical conclusions which M. Taine at last reveals to us,—conclusions which are to transform and change the soul as well as the understanding. This doctrine has hitherto been but a dream, and society has, up to the present time, walked in darkness.

This philosophical system is so beautifully set forth, that it can only be compared to a skeleton, upon which a profusion of lovely-scented flowers and precious jewels have been heaped, so that, notwithstanding the horror it inspires, one is unable to leave it.

Here, then, we find that M. Taine comes forth resolutely, by the help of a vigorous understanding and a surpassing talent, to review all that England has produced in a literary sense,—authors as well as their works. The type which he has conceived alone escapes his censure. This type must be the result of three primeval causes, viz., race, centre and time. History must prove its correctness. History and logic might in vain claim his indulgence on behalf of other types. He has conceived his system in his own mind, and, to establish it, facts and characters are made subservient to it; history's duty is to prove

their correctness. Indulgence can be shown to one type only.

All he says is, however, so well said, that if he offended truth a little less, if he only spoke for beings in another planet, and above all, if, under these beautiful surroundings, one failed to notice the gloom of a heaven without God, the work would enchant one.

It must be allowed that the charms of truth are still to be preferred; we must therefore be allowed to say a few words about M. Taine's system. It can only be in one sense; not on account of any philosophical pretension, nor in the hope of restoring nature to its rights, however much we may grieve at seeing it reduced to a mere animal, nay, a vegetable, and alas! may be, a mineral system.

Many able pens will repeat the admirable words of one of the cleverest men of the day, who, in his criticism upon M. Taine's book, has so thoroughly examined how far a physiological method could be applied to the comprehension of moral and intellectual phenomena, and has shown to what fatal consequences such a method must lead. The analysis of the moral world, the study of souls and of talent, of doctrines and of characters, become in M. Taine's mind only a branch of zoology, and psychology ends by being only a part of natural history.

Many other able writers will echo the noble words of M. Caro, and will not fail to point out the numerous contradictions which exist between the work itself and history proper, between it and natural history, and, finally, between it and the author himself.

Thus, men who have never allowed that a thistle

could produce a rose, will question also whether those young Englishmen, whom M. Taine depicts in such glowing colours,—"So active," says he, "just like harriers on the beat, flaring the air in the midst of the hunt," can be transformed in a few years "into beings resembling animals good for slaughter, with appearances equally anxious, vacant, and stupid; gentlemen six feet high, with long and stout German bodies, issuing from their forests with savage-looking whiskers and rolling eyes of pale earthenware-blue colour."

Such critics will question whether the "pale earthenware-blue eyes" of these ugly sires can possibly be those of the fathers of the candid-eyed girls, the fairest among the fair treasures of this earth, whom M. Taine describes in such exquisite terms :—

"Delightful creatures, whose freshness and innocence cannot be conceived by those who have never seen them! full-blown flowers, of which a morning rose, with its delicious and delicate colour, with its petals dipped in dew, can alone give an idea."

Critics will deny the possibility of the existence of such a phenomenon, so contrary to the laws of creation does it seem to be. Such airy like forms cannot be produced by such heavy brutes as he describes. Say what he likes, nature cannot act in the manner indicated by M. Taine. Nature must ever follow the same track.

We, however, shall confine ourselves to oppose the real Lord Byron to the fanciful one of M. Taine; and we say that the portrait of the poet drawn by

the latter is drawn systematically, in such a manner as to contribute to the general harmony of his work. But truth cannot be subservient to systems. As M. Taine views Lord Byron from a false starting point, it follows that, of course, the whole portrait of him is equally unreal.

All the colours in his picture are too dark. What he says of the poet is not so false as it is exaggerated. This is a method peculiar to him. He decidedly perceives the real person, but exaggerates him, and thus fails to realize the original.

If the facts are not always entirely false, his conclusions, and the consequences suggested to him by them, are always eminently so.

When the facts seem ever so little to lend themselves to his reasoning, when the proportions of his victim allow of their being placed in the *bed of Procrustes*, the magnificent draperies of which do not hide the atrocious torture; then, indeed, does M. Taine respect history more or less; when this is not the case, his imagination supplies the deficiency. On this principle he gives us his details of Lord Byron's parents and of the poet's childhood.

He makes use of Lord Byron as an artist makes use of a machine: he places him in the position which he has chosen himself, gives him the gesture he pleases, and the expression he wishes. The portrait he shows us of him may be a little like Lord Byron; but a very distant likeness, one surrounded by a world of caprice of fancy and eccentricity which serve to make up a powerful picture. It is the effect of a well posed manikin, with its very flexible articulations, all placed at the disposal of M. Taine's

system. The features may be slightly those of Lord Byron, but the gestures and the general physiognomy are the clever creations of the artist.

This is how he proceeds, in order to obtain the triumph of his views :—

He selects some quarter of an hour from the life of a man, probably that during which he obeyed the impulses of nature, and judges his whole existence and character by this short space of time.

He takes from the author's career one page, perhaps that which he may have written in a moment of hallucination or of extreme passion; and by this single page he judges the author of ten volumes.

Take Lord Byron, for instance. With regard to his infancy, M. Taine takes care to set aside all that he knows to be admirable in the boy, and only notices one instance of energy, one fit of heroic passion, into which the unjust reprimand of a maid had driven him. The touching tears which the little Byron sheds when, in the midst of his playmates, he is informed that he has been raised to the dignity of a peer of the realm, are no sign to M. Taine of a character equally timid, sensitive, and good, but the result of pride. In this trait, alone, M. Taine sees almost sufficient ground to lay thereon the foundations of his work, and to show us in the boy what the man was to be. A similar process is used in the examination of Byron as an author. He analyses 'Manfred,' which is most decidedly a work of prodigious power, and all he says of it is certainly both true and worthy of his own great talent; but is it fair to say that the poet and the man are entirely revealed in this work, and to dismiss all the other

creations of the poet, wherein milder qualities, such as feeling, tenderness, and goodness are revealed, and shine forth most prominently? 'Manfred' is the cry of an ulcerated heart, still struggling, with all the energy of a most powerful soul, against the brutal decrees of a recent persecution. Lord Byron felt himself to be the victim of the relentless conduct of Lady Byron, and if his mind was not deranged, at least his soul was wounded and ill at ease, and it was this spirit that dictated 'Manfred.' Did he not clearly confess it himself? When he sent 'Manfred' to Murray, did he not say that it was a drama as mad as the tragedy of 'Lee Bedlam,' in twenty-five acts, and a few comic scenes,—his own being only in three acts?

Did he not write to Moore as follows?—

"I wrote a sort of mad drama for the sake of introducing the Alpine scenery. Almost all the *dramatis personæ* are spirits, ghosts, or magicians; and the scene is in the Alps and the other world, so you may suppose what a Bedlam tragedy it must be . . . . . The third act, like the Archbishop of Grenada's homily (which savoured of the palsy), has the dregs of my fever, during which it was written. It must on no account be published in its present state . . . . The speech of Manfred to the sun is the only part of this act I thought good myself; the rest is certainly as bad as bad can be, and I wonder what the devil possessed me."

But let Byron's ideas take a different turn, as the lovely blue Italian sky and the refreshing breezes from the Adriatic waters contribute to quicken his

blood, and other tones will be heard, wherein no longer shall the excesses, but the beauties only of energy be discernible.

What does M. Taine say then? This new aspect does not, evidently, satisfy him! but what of that? He goes on to say that Byron's genius is falling off. If the poet takes advantage of a few moments of melancholy common to all poetical and feeling souls, M. Taine declares that the melancholy English nature is always associated with the Epicurean. What is it to him, that England thinks differently? that in her opinion Lord Byron's grandest and noblest conceptions are the poems which he wrote in Italy, and even on the eve of his death? and that she finds his liveliness "too real and too ultramontane to suit her national tastes"? Nothing of this troubles M. Taine.

Is it quite fair to judge so powerful a mind, so great and yet so simple a being as Lord Byron, only by his 'Manfred,' or by some other passages of his works, and especially of 'Don Juan'? Can his amiable, docile, tender, and feeling nature honestly be seen in the child of three years of age, who tears his clothes because his nurse has punished him unfairly? No; all that we see is what M. Taine wishes us to see for the purpose he has in view, that is, admiration of the Lord Byron he has conceived, and who is necessary to his cause,—a Byron only to be likened to a furious storm.

Wishing Byron to appear as the type of energy, M. Taine exhibits him to our eyes in the light of Satan defying all powers on earth and in heaven. The better to mould him to the form he has chosen,

he begins by disfiguring him in the arms of his mother, whom with his father and his family he scruples not to calumniate. Storms having their origin in the rupture of the elements, and a violent character being, according to M. Taine, the result of several forces acting internally and mechanically; it follows that its primary cause is to be found in the disturbed moral condition of those who have given birth to him in the circumstances under which the child was born, and in the influence under which he has been brought up. Hence the necessity of supplementing from imagination the historical and logical facts which otherwise might be at fault.

As for Lord Byron's softness of manner, and as to that tenderness of character which was the bane of his existence,—as to his real and great goodness, which made him loved always and everywhere, and which caused such bitter tears to be shed at the news of his death,—these qualities are not to be sought in the strange, fanciful being who is styled Byron by M. Taine. These qualities would be out of place; they would be opposed to the idea upon which his entire system is founded. They must be merged in the energy and greatness of intellect of the poetical giant.

Unfortunately for M. Taine, facts speak too forcibly and too inopportunely against him. Not one of the causes which he mentions, not one of the conclusions which he draws in respect to Lord Byron's character as a poet, and as a mere mortal, are to be relied upon. He, who contends that he possesses pre-eminently the power of comprehending the man and the author, insists that Lord Byron was no

exception to the rule, though his best biographer, Moore, most distinctly opposes this opinion :—

"In Lord Byron, however, this sort of pivot of character was almost wholly wanting . . . . So various indeed, and contradictory, were his attributes, both moral and intellectual, that he may be pronounced to have been not one, but many; nor would it be any great exaggeration of the truth to say that out of the mere partition of the properties of his single mind a plurality of characters, all different and all vigorous, might have been furnished."

On the other hand, M. Taine, who generally pays little attention to the opinion of others, gives as Lord Byron's predominant characteristic that which phrenologists denominate "*combativité*." Which of the two is likely to be right? If Moore is right, Lord Byron must have been almost wanting in consistency of character; if Taine is correct, then Byron was really of a most passionate nature. But as we have proved that Lord Byron was not inconsistent, as Moore declares, except in cases where this want of consistency did not interfere with his character as a man, and, on the other hand, that no one had a less combative disposition, we are forced to arrive at the conclusion that if Byron had one dominant passion, it was most decidedly not that of "*combativité*." It is impossible to deny that if in his early youth signs of resistance may have appeared in his character, yet these had so completely disappeared with the development of his intellect and of his moral sentiments that no one more than himself hated controversies and discussions of all kinds. In fact, no one was more obedient to the

call of reason and of friendship; and his whole life is an illustration of it.

In order that Lord Byron should represent the English type, even if we adopt M. Taine's philosophy, he should have had a deal of Saxon blood in his veins. But this was not the case. It is the Norman blood which predominates. He may be said to have been almost born in France, and to be of French extraction by his father, and of Scotch origin through his mother. The total absence of the Saxon element, which was so remarkable in him, was equally noticeable in his tastes, mind, sympathies, and inclinations.

He loved France very dearly, and Pouqueville tells a story, that when Ali Pasha had got over the fright caused by the announcement that a young traveller, named Byron (his name had been pronounced Bairon which made the Pasha believe he was a Turk in disguise), wished to see him, he received the young lord very cordially. As he had just conquered Preveza from the French, Ali Pasha though he should be pleasing the Englishman by announcing the fact to him. Byron replied—"But I am no enemy of France. Quite the contrary, I love France."

It might almost be said that he was quite the opposite of what a Saxon should be. Lord Byron could not remain, and, actually, lived a very short time, in England. His habits were not English, nor his mode of living. Far from over-eating, as the English, according to M. Taine, are said to do, Byron did not eat enough. He was as sober as a monk. His favourite food was vegetables. His abstinence from meat dated from his youth. His body was little

adapted to the material wants of his country. This remarkable sobriety was the effect of taste and principle, and was in no ways broken by excesses which might have acted as compensations. The excesses of which M. Taine speaks must have been at the utmost some slight deviations from the real Pythagorean abstinence which he had laid down as the rule of his life. Abroad, where he lived almost all his life, he had none of the habits of his countrymen. He lived everywhere as a cosmopolitan. All that his body craved for was cleanliness, and this only served to improve his health and the marvellous beauty with which God had gifted him.

Lord Byron was so little partial to the characteristic features and customs of the country in which he was born—"but where he would not die"—that the then so susceptible *amour-propre* of his countrymen reproached him with it as a most unpardonable fault.

It was not he who would have placed England and the English above all foreigners, and Frenchmen in particular; nor was it he who would have declared them to be the princes of the human race. Justice and truth forbade his committing himself to such statements in the name of national pride.

Are the animal rather than moral, and moral rather than intellectual instincts of energy and will, which M. Taine so much admires in the Saxon race, defects or qualities in his eyes? It is difficult to say, for one never knows when he is praising or when he is condemning. Judging by the very material causes from which he derives this energy,—namely, the constitution of the people, their climate, their

frequent craving for food, their way of cooking the food they eat, their drinks, and all the consequences of these necessities visible in the absence of all sense of delicacy, of all appreciation of the fine arts, and the comprehension of philosophy,—he must evidently intend to depreciate them.

But as regards Lord Byron in particular, it is equally certain that he has no intention of depreciating him. For him alone he finds expressions of great admiration and real sympathy. He allows him to represent the whole nation, and to be the incarnation of the English character; but on one condition,—that of ruling it as its sovereign. Thanks to this supremacy, the poet escapes more or less the exigencies of M. Taine's theories.

M. Taine, however, is not subject to the weakness of enthusiasm. Judging, as he does, in the light of a lover of nature, both of the merits of virtue and of the demerits of vice, which to him are but fatal results of the constitution, the climate, and the soil—"in a like manner will sugar and vitriol"—why care about Lord Byron doing this or the other *rightly* or *wrongly* rather than any one else? Nature follows its necessary track, seeks its equilibrium, and ends by finding it.

What pleases him in Lord Byron, is the facility which is offered to him of proving the truth of this fatalist philosophy which appears at every page of his book.

No one more than Byron could serve the purpose of M. Taine, and become, as it were, the basis of his philosophical operations.

His powerful genius, his short but eventful exist-

ence, which did not give time for the cooling down of the ardour of youth, to harmonize it with the tempered dictates of mature age,—the universality of his mind, which can furnish arguments to every species of critic,—all contributed wonderfully to the realisation of M. Taine's object.

Thus, thanks to the deceptive but generally received portrait which is said to be that of Lord Byron, and to his identification with the heroes of his poems, and in particular with 'Manfred' and 'Childe Harold,' aided by the impossibility which the human mind finds in estimating moral subjects as it would a proposition of 'Euclid,' M. Taine has been able to make use of a great name, and to make a fine demonstration of his system, to call Byron the interpreter of the British genius, and his poetry the expression of the man himself.

In many respects, however, he has not been able to act in this way without violating historical facts. This is what I hope to point out in these pages, the object of which is to describe Byron as he was, and to substitute, without any derogation to his sublimity of character, the reality for the fiction created by M. Taine. To refute so brilliant and so powerful a writer, my only means is to proceed in this work with the help of positive proofs of the statements which I make, and by invoking unimpeachable testimonies. These alone constitute weighty arguments, since they all contribute to produce the same impression. In order that truth may be restored to history, I shall adopt a system diametrically opposed to that of M. Taine, or rather I shall abstain from all systems, and from all pretensions

to literary merit, and confine myself entirely to facts and to reason.

The reader will judge whether I shall be able to accomplish this object; he will see how really unimportant are the causes which cast a shade upon the memory of Byron, and how careful one should be not to give credit too implicitly to the sincerity of that hypocritical praise which several of his biographers have bestowed upon him. They have, as it were, generally, taken a kind of pleasure in dwelling upon his age, his rank, and other extenuating circumstances, as a cover to their censure, just as if Byron ever required their forgiveness. In thus searching into the secrets of his heart, and analysing his life, the reader will soon be obliged to admit, that if Byron, in common with others, had a few of the faults of youth, he in return had a host of virtues which belonged only to him. In short, if Byron is received in the light in which he was esteemed by those who knew him personally, he will still constitute one of the finest, most amiable, and grandest characters of his century. As for ourselves, in summing up the merits of this very humble, but very conscientious work, we can only repeat with delight the beautiful words in which Moore sums up his own estimate of Lord Byron's worth: "Should the effect of my humble labours be to clear away some of those mists that hung round my friend, and show him, in most respects, as worthy of love as he was, in all, of admiration, then will the chief and sole aim of this work have been accomplished." *

* Moore, vol. ii. p. 782.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD BYRON'S RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

"When the triumph of a cause of such importance to humanity is in question, there never can be too many advocates. . . . . But it is not enough to count up the votes; their value must, above all, be weighed."—SHERER.

THE struggles between heart and reason, in religious matters, began almost with Lord Byron's infancy. His desire of reconciling them was such, that, if unsuccessful, his mind was perplexed and restless. He was not, as it were, out of the cradle when, in the midst of his childish play, the great problems of life already filled his youthful thoughts; and his good nurse May, who was wont to sing psalms to him when rocking him to sleep, had also to answer questions which showed the dangerous curiosity of his mind.

"Among the traits," says Moore, "which should be recorded of his earlier years, I should mention, that, according to the character given of him by his first nurse's husband, he was, when a mere child, 'particularly inquisitive and puzzling about religion.'"

At ten years of age, he was sent to school, at Dulwich, under the care of the Rev. Dr. Glennie, who, in the account given by him to Moore, and after speaking of the amiable qualities of Byron, adds: that "At that age he already possessed an intimate acquaintance with the historical facts in the

Scriptures, and was particularly delighted when he could speak of them to him, especially on Sunday evenings after worship. He was wont then to reason upon all the facts contained in the Bible, with every appearance of faith in the doctrine which it teaches.

But while his heart was thus drawn towards its Creator, the power of his reason began imperiously to assert its rights. As long as he remained sheltered under his father's roof, under the eyes of his mother, and of young ecclesiastics who were his first teachers, and whose practice agreed with their teaching,—as long as his reason had not reached a certain degree of development,—he remained orthodox and pious. But when he went to college, and particularly when he was received at Cambridge, a vast field of contradictions opened before his observing and thinking mind. His reflections, together with the study of the great psychological questions, soon clouded his mind, and threw a shade over his orthodoxy. If Lord Byron, therefore, had really the misfortune to lose, at an earlier age than ordinary children, the simple faith of his childhood, the fact is not to be wondered at. By the universality of his genius he added to the faculties which form the poet, those of an eminently logical and practical mind; and being precocious in all things, he was likewise so in his powers of reflection and reasoning. "Never," says Moore, "did Lord Byron lose sight of reality and of common practical sense; his genius, however high it soared, ever preserved upon earth a support of some kind."

His intellectual inquisitiveness was likewise, with

him, a precocious passion, and circumstances stood so well in the way to serve this craving, that when fifteen years of age (incredible as it seems), he had already perused two thousand volumes, amongst which his powerful and vivid intellect had been able to weigh the contradictions of all the principal modern and ancient systems of philosophy. This thirst for knowledge (anomalous according to the rules of both school and college) was the more extraordinary that it existed in him together with a passionate love for boyish play, and the indulgence in all the bodily exercises, in which he excelled, and on which he prided himself. But as he stored his mind after the usual college hours, and apart from the influences of that routine discipline, which, with Milton, Pope, and almost all the great minds, he so cordially hated, the real progress of his intellect remained unobserved by his masters, and even by his fellow-students. This mistake, on the part of men little gifted with quickness of perception, was not shared by Disraeli, who could so justly appreciate genius; and of Byron he spoke as of a studious boy, who loved to hide this quality from his comrades, thinking it more amiable on his part to appear idle in their eyes.

Whilst the young man thus strengthened his intellect by hard though irregular study, his meditative and impassioned nature, feeling in the highest degree the necessity of confirming its impressions, experienced more imperatively than a youth of fifteen generally does, the want of examining the traditional teachings which had been transmitted to him. Byron felt the necessity of inquiring on what irrevoc-

able proofs the dogmas which he was called upon to believe were based. Holy Writ, aided by the infallibility of the teachings of the Church, &c., were adduced as the proofs he required.

He was wont, therefore, to read with avidity a number of books treating on religious matters; and he perused them, both with artless ingenuity and in the hope of their strengthening his faith. But, could he truly find faith in their pages? Are not such books rather dangerous than otherwise for some minds?

"The truth is," says the author of the 'Essays,' "that a mind which has never entertained a doubt in revelation, may conceive some doubts by reading books written in its defence." And he adds elsewhere, in speaking of the writers of such controversial works, that "impatient of the least hesitation, they deny with anger the value of their adversary's arguments, and betray, in their way of getting over difficulties, a humour which injures the effects of their reasoning, and of the proofs they make use of to help their arguments." After reading several of these books, he must have found, as did the great Pitt, "that such readings provoke many more doubts than they dispel;" and, in fact, they rather disquieted and shook, than strengthened his faith. At the same time, he was alive to another striking contradiction. He noticed that the men who taught the doctrines, too often forgot to make these and their practice agree; and in losing his respect for his masters, he still further doubted the sincerity of their teaching. Thus, whilst remaining religiously inclined, he must have felt his faith becoming more

and more shaken, and in the memorandum of his early days, after enumerating the books treating upon religious subjects which he had read, he says: "All very tedious. I hate books treating of religious subjects; although I adore and love God, freed from all absurd and blasphemous notions."

In this state of mind, of which one especially finds a proof in his earlier poems, the philosophy of Locke, which is that professed at Cambridge, and which he had already skimmed, as it were, together with other philosophical systems, became his study. It only added an enormous weight in the way of contradictions to the already heavy weight of doubt.

Could it be otherwise? Does not Locke teach that all ideas being the creation of the senses, the notion of God, unless aided by tradition, has no other basis but our senses and the sight of the external world? If this be not the doctrine professed by Locke, it is the reading which a logical mind may give to it.

He believes in God; yet the notion of God, as it appears from his philosophical teaching, is not that which is taught by Christian doctrine. According to him, God is not even proclaimed to be the Creator of the Universe. But even were He proclaimed such, what would be the result of this philosophical condescension, unless it be that God is distinct from the world? Would God possess then all those attributes which reason, independently of all philosophy, points to in the Divinity? Would power, goodness, infinite perfection, be God's? Certainly not: as we are unable to know Him except through a world of imperfections, where good and evil, order and confusion, are mixed together, and not by the concep-

tion of the infinite, which alone can give us a true and perfect idea of God, it follows that God would be much superior to the world, but would not be absolute perfection.

After this depreciation of the Omnipotent, what says this philosophy of our soul? It does away altogether with one of the essential proofs of its spiritual nature, and thereby compromises the soul itself, declaring as it does, that "it is not unlikely that matter is capable of thought." But then of what necessity would the soul be, if the body can think? How hope for immortality, if that which thinks is subject to dissolution and to death?

As for our liberty, it would be annihilated as a consequence of such doctrines; for it is not supposed to derive its essence from the interior activity of the soul, but would seem to be limited to our power of moving. Yet we are hourly experiencing what our weakness is in comparison with the power of the laws of nature, which rule us in every sense and way. In making, therefore, all things derivable from sensations, Locke, fell from one error into another, and nearly arrived at that point when duty and all principles of justice and morality might be altogether denied. Being himself, however, both good, honest, liberal, and Christian-minded, he could only save himself from the social wreck to which he exposed others, by stopping on the brink of the abyss which he had himself created, and by becoming in practice inconsistent with his speculative notions. His successors, such as Condillac and Cabanis, fell by following his system and by carrying it too far.

A doctrine which denies the right of discovering,

or of explaining the religious truths which are the grounds of all moral teaching, and which allows tradition the privilege only of bestowing faith; a system of metaphysics, which cannot avoid the dangers in which morality must perish, owing to its contradictions and its inconsistencies, must be perilous for all but those happily constituted minds for whom simple faith and submission are a part of their essence, who believe on hearsay and seek not to understand, but merely glance at the surface of the difficult and venturesome questions which are discussed before them, either because they feel their weakness, or because the light of revelation shines upon them so strongly as to make that of reason pale. For more logical minds, however, for such who are inquisitive, whose reason is both anxious and exacting, who want to understand before they believe, for whom the ties which linked them to tradition have been loosened, owing to their having reflected on a number of contradictions (the least of which, in the case of Lord Byron, was decidedly not that of seeing such a philosophy professed and adopted in a clerical university); for minds like these such doctrines must necessarily lead to atheism. Though Lord Byron's mind was one of these, he escaped the fearful results by a still greater effort of his reason, which made him reject the precepts of the sensualists, and comprehend their inconsistencies.

His protest against the doctrines of the sensualists is entered in his memorandum, where, after naming all the authors of the philosophical systems which he had read, and, coming to the head of that school, he exclaims from the bottom of his heart—

"Hobbes! I detest him!"

And notwithstanding the respect with which the good and great Locke must individually have inspired him, he evidently must have repudiated his precepts, inasmuch as they were not strong enough to uproot from his mind the religious truths which reason proclaims, nor prevent either his coming out of his philosophical struggle a firm believer in all the dogmas which are imperiously upheld to the human reason, or his proclaiming his belief in one God and Creator, in our free will, and in the immortality of the soul.

This glorious and noble victory of his mind and true religious tendencies at that time, is evinced in his 'Prayer to Nature,' written when he had not yet reached his eighteenth year. In this beautiful prayer, which his so-called orthodox friends succeeded in having cut out of the volume containing his earliest poems, we find both great power of contemplation and humility and confidence in prayer—a soul too near the Creator to doubt of His Omnipotence, but also too far from Him for his faith and confidence in the divine mercy not to be mixed up with a little fear; in fact, all the essential elements of a noble prayer which is not orthodox. Though written on the threshold of life, he might, with few modifications, have signed it on the eve of his death; when, still young, fate had spared him nothing, from the sweetest to the bitterest feelings, from every deserved pleasure to every undeserved pain.

THE PRAYER OF NATURE.

FATHER of Light! great God of Heaven!
Hear'st thou the accents of despair?
Can guilt like man's be e'er forgiven?
Can vice atone for crimes by prayer?

Father of Light, on thee I call!
Thou seest my soul is dark within;
Thou who canst mark the sparrow's fall,
Avert from me the death of sin.

No shrine I seek, to sects unknown;
Oh, point to me the path of truth!
Thy dread omnipotence I own;
Spare, yet amend, the faults of youth.

Let bigots rear a gloomy fane,
Let superstition hail the pile,
Let priests, to spread their sable reign,
With tales of mystic rites beguile.

Shall man confine his Maker's sway
To Gothic domes of mouldering stone?
Thy temple is the face of day;
Earth, ocean, heaven, thy boundless throne.

Shall man condemn his race to hell,
Unless they bend in pompous form?
Tell us that all, for one who fell,
Must perish in the mingling storm?

Shall each pretend to reach the skies,
Yet doom his brother to expire,
Whose soul a different hope supplies,
Or doctrines less severe inspire?

Shall these, by creeds they can't expound,
Prepare a fancied bliss or woe?
Shall reptiles, grovelling on the ground,
Their great Creator's purpose know?

Shall those, who live for self alone,
Whose years float on in daily crime—
Shall they by Faith for guilt atone,
And live beyond the bounds of Time?

Father! no prophet's laws I seek,—
Thy laws in Nature's works appear;—
I own myself corrupt and weak,
Yet will I pray, for thou wilt hear!

Thou, who canst guide the wandering star
Through trackless realms of æther's space;
Who calm'st the elemental war,
Whose hand from pole to pole I trace:

Thou, who in wisdom placed me here,
Who, when thou wilt, canst take me hence,
Ah! whilst I tread this earthly sphere,
Extend to me thy wide defence.

To Thee, my God, to thee I call!
Whatever weal or woe betide,
By thy command I rise or fall,
In thy protection I confide.

If, when this dust to dust's restored,
My soul shall float on airy wing,
How shall thy glorious name adored
Inspire her feeble voice to sing!

But, if this fleeting spirit share
With clay the grave's eternal bed,
While life yet throbs I raise my prayer,
Though doom'd no more to quit the dead.

To Thee I breathe my humble strain,
Grateful for all thy mercies past,
And hope, my God, to thee again
This erring life may fly at last.

December 29, 1806. [First published, 1830.]

As much may be said of another poem which he likewise wrote in his youth; when, very dangerously ill, and believing his last end to be near, he turned all his thoughts to the other world, and conceived the touching poem which ended in the lines:—

"Forget this world, my restless sprite;
Turn, turn thy thoughts to Heaven;
There must thou soon direct thy flight
If errors are forgiven."

But if Lord Byron did not adopt Locke's philosophy, he at least paid the greatest tribute of regard to his goodness by following ever more closely his best precept, which is to the effect that to love truth for

the sake of truth is an essential part of human perfection in this world, and the fertile soil on which is sown the seed of every virtue.

While his mind thus wavered between a thousand contradictory opinions, and, finding part of the truth only in every philosophical system which he examined, but not the whole truth—which was what his soul thirsted for; calling himself at times sceptic, because he hesitated in adhering to one school, in consequence of the numerous errors and inconsistencies common to all (the great school which has, to the honour of France, harmonized them all was not yet open); but not losing sight of the great eternal truths of which he felt inwardly the proofs, he made the acquaintance of a young man who had just completed his university education with great success. This young man, who exercised a great influence over all his fellow students, owing to his superior intellect, influenced Byron in a similar manner. Bold, logical, inflexible, he was not swayed by the dangers which the sensualistic teaching presented to all logical minds; dangers which had frightened the chief of that school himself, and who, in wishing to oppose them, had not been able to do so except by contradictions. This young man, by a noble inconsistency, drew back in presence of the moral conclusions of that metaphysical doctrine, but not without culling from the master's thoughts conclusions, such that they leave all that is spiritual and immortal without defence, together with all the legitimate inferences to be derived from the principles he taught, however impious or absurd.

Among the Germans he had likewise met with

several bold doctrines; but, merely to speak here of the conclusions to which the school he belonged necessarily brought him, he arrived at those conclusions by a series of deductions from the study of those great questions, which experience always ends by referring either to reason or to revelation. Compelled by the tenets of that school, to solve all these problems by means of the sensations only, he was naturally led to the conclusion that no such thing existed as the spirituality of the soul, and hence, that it had neither the gift of immortality nor that of liberty, nor any principles of morality. Finally, obliged to seek in tradition the conviction that a God existed, and that He can only be perceived through a maze of imperfections, and not as reason conceives Him clearly and simply with all His necessary attributes of perfection, he was even led to the necessity of losing sight of a Creator altogether.

The fatal precipice, which this young student himself avoided by the practical conclusions by which he abided, Byron likewise escaped both by his conclusions and his theoretical notions. He even hated the name of atheist to that degree, that at Harrow he wished to fight his companion Lord Althorpe, because he had written the word atheist under Byron's name. This is so true that Sir Robert Dallas, of whose judgment no interpretation can ever be given without making allowances for the intolerant spirit and the exaggeration required by his notions of othodoxy and by his party prejudices, after regretting that Lord Byron should not have had a shield during his minority to protect him against his comrades, "proud, free-thinking, and acute sophists," as he calls them,

adds that, if surprise must be expressed, it is not that Byron should have erred, but that he should have pierced the clouds which surrounded him, and have dispersed them by the sole rays of his genius.

So many struggles, however, so many contradictions, so many strains upon the mind, while leaving his heart untouched, could not but multiply the doubts which he conceived, and more or less modify his mind, and even give to it a tinge of scepticism.

When he left England for the first time, his mind was in this transitory, suffering state. The various countries which he visited, the various creeds with which he became acquainted, the intolerance of the one, the laxity in others in direct opposition to their superstitious and irrational practices; the truly touching piety which he found in the Greek monasteries (at Zytza and at Athens), in the midst of which and in the silence of whose cloisters, he loved to share the peace and even the austerities of a monkish life; his transition from the Western countries, where reason is placed above imagination, to the East, where the opposite is aimed at—all contributed to prevent what was vacillating in his mind from becoming settled. Meanwhile endless disappointments, bitter sorrows, and broken illusions contributed their share to the pain which his mind experienced at every stage of its philosophical inquiry, and contributed to give him, in the loneliness of his life, a tinge of misanthropy opposed to his natural character, which suggested the rather philosophical and generous than prudent conception of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,' where he depicts his hero as intellectually imbued with philosophical doctrines which lead practical minds to scep-

ticism and materialism! These doctrines resulted in causing 'Childe Harold' to lose that traditional faith which gives peace to the soul by ensuring conviction to the mind. The poet shows the impossibility of withdrawing himself from their disastrous results when arrived at the age when passions assert their rule, and when in a certain social position, they must be carried into practice. Nature not having gifted him with a sufficiently generous heart to check the disease of his mind, Childe Harold, *disgusted with the sins of his youth*, no longer seeks the road to virtue, but begins to experience with Solomon the vanity of human things, becomes a prey to satiety, ennui, and to insensibility to both physical and moral worth.

Byron, who made the intellectual education of his day responsible for Childe Harold's faults, had conceived this character in his earliest days at Harrow. It was in any case, he said, a characteristic of the youth of those days, although idealised and drawn from his own imagination. His enemies and his rivals have endeavoured to prove that he wished to describe in this poem the state of his own mind. They made capital out of a few historical and local circumstances, to give to their falsehood some appearance of truth. But only those who did not know him personally could be ignorant how improbable it was that any resemblance between the poet and his hero could be maintained.

Let us confine ourselves to the remark that Lord Byron, instead of personifying his hero, personifies no one but simply the poet. Let us add, besides, that in no case could Lord Byron be made responsible for

the consequences of the doctrines of the materialists, as held by his hero. Not only because of his nature, which was totally opposed to them, but also and especially because of his tendencies, which were eminently and persistently those of a spiritualist, and which clung to him throughout his life even at the time when he was accused of scepticism. This was at the time when he wrote the second canto of 'Childe Harold.' Thoughts, little in unison with, if not entirely opposed to his intimate convictions, sprang from his sick heart to his head: his soul became dejected, and his copious tears so obscured his eyes as to veil from them for a time the existence of the Almighty, which he seemed to question; and he appeared to think that if the Cambridge philosophy was right in doubting the soul's spirituality, its immortality might be equally questioned. These doubts having been expressed in his own, and not in his hero's name, at the outset of the second canto of 'Childe Harold,' led to his being also accused of scepticism.

But if pain actually paralyzed for a time the elasticity of his mind, the latter very soon recovered its natural vigour and showed itself in all its glowing energy in the eighth and ninth stanzas, which are most delicate emanations from a beautiful soul. The first stanzas alone, however, continued to occupy the attention of some orthodox and over-scrupulous minds: poetry not necessarily being a mode of teaching philosophy. We must besides remark that the meaning of the lines is purely hypothetical. In *saying* that the soul might *not be immortal*, is it not saying much the same as was said by Locke in the words

the soul is perhaps spiritual? Is not that perishable which is capable of dissolution according to the laws of the world? Lord Byron, though a stanch spiritualist at heart, derived his doubts from other much less exalted authorities. Believing implicitly in the omnipotence of the Creator, could he not modestly fear that God, who had made his soul out of nothing, might cause it to return to nothing? Might he not imagine that the contrary belief was rather the result of our wishes, of our pride, and of the importance which we love to attach to ourselves? Can the conviction of the existence of immortality, unless founded upon revelation, be anything else but a hope or a sentiment? Pantheists alone find immortality to be the fatal consequence of their presumptuous doctrine. But what an immortality! One to be laughed at, as a philosopher of our days so well expresses it.

Accused of scepticism, Byron replied by explaining the meaning of his lines in a note which, at the instance of Mr. Dallas, he also consented to suppress with his habitual good-nature, and in which he endeavoured to show that the spirit which pervaded the whole of the poem was rather one of discouragement and despair, than raillery at religion, and that, after all, the effect of religion upon the world had been less to make men love their equals than to excite the various sects to a hatred against one another, and thus give rise to those fanatical wars which have caused so much bloodshed and injured so deeply the cause which they were intended to defend.

In reading this note again, one can with difficulty make out what Dallas' objections were, and why he

tried so hard to have it suppressed; for it savours much more of a spirit of toleration and charity than of scepticism. Lord Byron nevertheless withdrew it.

But this was not enough to satisfy the British straight-lacedness. As the accusations against his scepticism were on the increase daily, Mr. Gifford, for whose enlightened opinion Byron ever had great respect, advised him to be more prudent, whereupon Byron replied:—

"I will do as you advise in regard to religious matters. The best would perhaps be to avoid them altogether. Certainly the passages already published are rather too rigorously interpreted. I am no bigot of incredulity, and I did not expect that I should be accused of denying the existence of God, because I had expressed some doubts as to the immortality of the soul . . . . After all, I believe my doubts to be but the effects of some mental illness."

It is clear from this letter, the tone of which is so honest and sincere, that if in the stanzas which his rivals blamed there was really more scepticism than can be gathered from the consideration of man's littleness and God's greatness, yet it was not his real conviction. Perhaps it was only a kind of cloud overhanging the mind, produced by the great grief which weighed on his heart. These sentiments, however, must have been really his own for some time longer. In his journal of 1813 he expresses himself thus:—

"My restlessness tells me I have something within that 'passeth show.' It is for him who made it to prolong that spark of celestial fire which illuminates yet burns this frail tenement. . . . . In the

mean time I am grateful for some good, and tolerably patient under certain evils, *grace à Dieu et à mon bon tempérament.*"

But all this, as we have said, amounted to the opinion that an omnipotent God is the author of our soul, which is of a totally different nature to that of our body, and that the soul being spiritual and not subjected to the laws which rule the body, the soul must be immortal. That he who made it out of nothing can cause it to return to nothing. The orthodox doctrine does not teach, as pantheism does, that our soul cannot perish. It gives it only an individual immortality.

Notwithstanding this, and indeed on account of it, he was accused of being an atheist, in a poem entitled 'Anti-Byron.' This poem was the work of a clever rival, who made himself the echo of a party. Murray hesitated to publish it, but Byron, who was always just, praised the poem, and advised its publication.

"If the author thinks that I have written poetry with such tendencies, he is quite right to contradict it."

But having done so much for others, this time, at least, he fulfilled a duty towards himself by adding:—

"The author is however wrong on one point; I am not in the least an atheist;" and ends by saying, "It is very odd; eight lines may have produced eight thousand, if we calculate what has been and may still be said on the subject."

He speaks of the same work to Moore, in the same tone of pleasantry:—

"Oh, by-the-bye, I had nearly forgot. There is a long poem—an 'Anti-Byron'—coming out, to prove that I have formed a conspiracy to overthow by rhyme all religion and government, and have already made great progress! It is not very scurrilous, but serious and ethereal. I never felt myself important till I saw and heard of my being such a little Voltaire as to induce such a production."

He therefore laughed at these accusations as too absurd. As for scepticism, he did not defend himself from a touch of it; for not only did he feel that the suspicious stanza could partly justify the belief, but also because there did exist in him a kind of religious scepticism which proceeded far more from meditation and observation than from a passion for it. Such a scepticism is in truth a sigh for conviction, a painful vision which appears to most reflective minds in a more or less indistinct and vague manner, but which appeared more forcibly to him, inasmuch as it sought to be expressed in words.

"He," says Montaigne, "who analyses all the circumstances which have brought about matters, and all the consequences which have been derived from them, debars himself from having any choice, and remains sceptical."

This scepticism of Lord Byron, however, did not overstep the boundaries of permissible doubt, as prescribed by an intelligence desirous of improvement. This privilege he exercised; and one might say that he remained, as it were, suspended between heaven and earth, ever looking up towards heaven, from whence he felt that light must come in the end, —a light ever on the increase, which would daily

steady him in the great principles which form the fundamental basis of truth,—one God the creator, the real immortality of our soul, our liberty and our responsibility before God.

Tired, however, of ever being the butt of the invectives of his enemies, and of the clergy, whom he had roughly handled in his writings, Lord Byron preferred remaining silent; and until his arrival in Switzerland he ceased making any allusions in his writings to any philosophical doubts which he may have entertained. The heroes which he selected for his Oriental poems were, moreover, too passionate to allow the mysterious voices from heaven to silence the cries from their heart. These celestial warnings, however, Byron never ceased to hear, although absorbed himself by various passions of a different kind; he was at that time almost surrounded by an idolizing public, and rocked in the cradle of success and popularity. This is but too visible whenever he ceases to talk the language of his heroes, and expresses merely his own ideas and his own personal feelings. It was at this time that he wrote those delicious 'Hebrew Melodies,' in which a belief in spirituality and immortality is everywhere manifest, and in which is to be found the moral indication, if not the metaphysical proof, of the working of his mind in a religious point of view, as he matured in years. Two of these Melodies especially, the third and the fifteenth, contain so positive a profession of faith in the spiritualist doctrines, and carry with them the mark of so elevated a Christian sentiment, that I cannot forbear quoting them *in extenso*.

IF THAT HIGH WORLD.

I.

If that high world, which lies beyond
Our own, surviving Love endears;
If there the cherish'd heart be fond,
The eye the same, except in tears—
How welcome those untrodden spheres!
How sweet this very hour to die!
To soar from earth and find all fears
Lost in thy light—Eternity!

II.

It must be so: 't is not for self
That we so tremble on the brink;
And striving to o'erleap the gulf,
Yet cling to Being's severing link.
Oh! in that future let us think
To hold each heart the heart that shares;
With them the immortal waters drink,
And soul in soul grow deathless theirs!

WHEN COLDNESS WRAPS THIS SUFFERING CLAY.

I.

When coldness wraps this suffering clay,
Ah! whither strays the immortal mind?
It cannot die, it cannot stay,
But leaves its darken'd dust behind.
Then, unembodied, doth it trace
By steps each planet's heavenly way?
Or fill at once the realms of space,
A thing of eyes, that all survey?

II.

Eternal, boundless, undecay'd,
A thought unseen, but seeing all,
All, all in earth or skies display'd,
Shall it survey, shall it recall:
Each fainter trace that memory holds
So darkly of departed years,
In one broad glance the soul beholds,
And all, that was, at once appears.

III.

Before Creation peopled earth,
Its eye shall roll through chaos back;
And where the furthest heaven had birth,
The spirit trace its rising track.
And where the future mars or makes,
Its glance dilate o'er all to be,
While sun is quench'd or system breaks,
Fix'd in its own eternity.

IV.

Above or Love, Hope, Hate, or Fear,
It lives all passionless and pure:
An age shall fleet like earthly year;
Its years as moments shall endure.
Away, away, without a wing,
O'er all, through all, its thought shall fly,
A nameless and eternal thing,
Forgetting what it was to die.

There is no passage in Plato, or in St. Augustin, or in Pascal, which can equal the sublimity of these stanzas.

It was in this painful state of mind that he spent the unfortunate year of his marriage. Having separated from his wife, he came to Geneva. Here, at the same hotel—Hôtel de Secheron—Shelley had also arrived, who some years previously had offered Byron a copy of his poem entitled 'Queen Mab.' Here they became acquainted. Although only twenty-three years of age, Shelley had already experienced much sorrow during his short existence. Born of rich and aristocratic parents, and who professed very religious and Tory principles, Shelley had been sent to Eton at thirteen. His character was most peculiar. He had none of the tastes of the young, could not stand scholastic discipline, despised every rule and regulation, and spent his time in writing novels. He published two when fifteen

years old only, which appeared to be far above what could be expected from a boy of his age, but which deserved censure from their immoral tone. Owing to the nature of his mind, and especially at a time when reading has much influence, Shelley had conceived a great taste for the books which were disapproved of at college. Consequently the doctrines of the materialist school, which were the most in fashion then both in France and in England, so poisoned his mind as to cause him to become an atheist, and argue as such against several theologians. He even published a pamphlet, so exaggerated in tone that he entitled it, 'On the necessity of Atheism.' To crown this folly, Shelley sent round to all the bishops a copy of this work, and signed it with his own name.

Brought before the authorities to answer the charge of this audacious act, he persisted in his doctrines, and was actually preparing an answer to the judges in the same sense, when he was expelled from the university.

For people who know England a little, it is easy to conceive what an impression such conduct must have produced on the part of the eldest son of a family like his, of Tory principles, belonging to the aristocracy, intimate with the Prince Regent, and stanch, orthodox and severe in their religious tenets. Expelled from college, he was likewise sent away from home; and when his indignant father consented to see him again, Shelley was treated with such coldness that he was enraged at being received as a stranger in the bosom of a family of which he was the eldest son. This was not all: even the young lady

for whom Shelley had already conceived an affection, deemed it right to cast him off. Overwhelmed by all these but too well merited misfortunes, he took refuge in an inn, where he tried to poison himself.

As he was struggling between life and death, a young girl of fifteen, Miss Westbrook, took care of him. Believing himself to be past recovery, and having no other means of rewarding her attention except by marrying her, he did so, in the hope that after his death his family would provide for her. But it is not always so easy to die, and he did not die. His health, however, was completely broken, and all that remained to him besides was an ill-assorted marriage. After the Gretna Green ceremony, Shelley went to reside in Edinburgh. His marriage so exasperated his father, that from that time he ceased to have any intercourse with him.

From Scotland Shelley went to Ireland, which was then in a very disturbed state. His metaphysics led him to conceive the most dangerous social theories. Conquered by a very real love of humanity, which he hoped to serve by the realisation of his chimerical views, he even believed it to be his duty to make proselytes. Whilst recommending the observance of peace, and of a spirit of moderation on the one hand, he, on the other, published pamphlets and spoke at meetings with a degree of talent which earned for him a certain amount of reputation, if not of fame. Then he was seized with a violent admiration for the English school called "Lockists," and devoted himself to poetry by way of giving a literary expression to his metaphysical reveries, and to his social theories. Thus he wrote 'Queen Mab,' a poem

full of talent and imagination, but which is only the frame which encircles his most deplorable fancies. He sent a copy of it to all the noted literary men of England, and among them to Lord Byron, whose star had risen since the publication of 'Childe Harold.' Lord Byron declared, as may be seen in a note to the 'Due Foscari,' that the metaphysical portion of the poem was quite in opposition with his own opinions; but, with his usual impartiality and justice, he admired the poetry which is noticeable in this work, agreeing in this "with all those who are not blinded by bigotry and baseness of mind."

Shelley's marriage, contracted as it was under such strange auspices, was of course, very unfortunate. By his acquaintance with Godwin, one of the greatest literary characters of his day, Shelley came to know Mary, his daughter, by his marriage with the celebrated Mrs. Woolstoncraft. Each fell in love with the other, but Shelley was not yet free to marry Miss Godwin. He separated from the wife he had chosen only from grateful motives, although he had two children by her, and he left England for the first time, where he had become the object of persecutions of all kinds, and of a hatred which at a later period culminated in taking away his right to the guardianship of his children.

Such was his position when Lord Byron arrived in Switzerland, and alighted at the Hôtel Secheron. To make acquaintance, therefore, with the author of 'Queen Mab,' and with the daughter of Godwin, for whom he entertained great regard, was a natural consequence on the part of the author of 'Childe Harold.'

Notwithstanding their difference of character, their

diversity of taste, and their different habits, owing to the very opposite mode of living which they had followed, the two poets felt drawn to one another by that irresistible sympathy which springs up in the souls of two persecuted beings, however just that persecution may have been, as regards Shelley, but which was wholly unjust as regards Byron. Here we must allow Moore to speak :—

"The conversation of Shelley, from the extent of his poetic reading, and the strange, mystic speculations into which his systems of philosophy led him, was of a nature strongly to interest the attention of Lord Byron, and to turn him away from worldly associations and topics into more abstract and untrodden ways of thought. As far as contrast indeed is an enlivening ingredient of such intercourse, it would be difficult to find two persons more formed to whet each other's faculties by discussion, as on few points of common interest between them did their opinions agree: and that this difference had its root deep in the conformation of their respective minds, needs but a glance through the rich, glittering labyrinth of Shelley's pages to assure us.

"In Lord Byron, the real was never forgotten in the fanciful. However Imagination had placed her whole realm at his disposal, he was no less a man of this world than a ruler of hers: and, accordingly, through the airiest and most subtle creations of his brain, still the life-blood of truth and reality circulates. With Shelley it was far otherwise: his fancy was the medium through which he saw all things, his facts as well as his theories; and not only the greater part of his poetry, but the political and

philosophical speculations in which he indulged, were all distilled through the same over-refining and unrealizing alembic. Having started as a teacher and reformer of the world, at an age when he could know nothing of the world but from fancy, the persecution he met with on the threshold of this boyish enterprise only confirmed him in his first paradoxical views of human ills, and their remedies. Instead of waiting to take lessons from those of greater experience, he with a courage, admirable, had it been but wisely directed, made war upon both. . . With a mind, by nature, fervidly pious, he yet refused to acknowledge a Supreme Providence, and substituted some airy abstraction of 'Universal Love' in its place. An aristocrat by birth, and, as I understand, also in appearance and manners, he was yet a leveller in politics, and to such an utopian extent as to be the serious advocate of a community of goods. Though benevolent and generous to an extent that seemed to exclude all idea of selfishness, he yet scrupled not, in the pride of system, to disturb wantonly the faith of his fellow men, and, without substituting any equivalent good in its place, to rob the wretched of a hope, which, even if false, would be better than all this world's best truths.

"Upon no point were the opposite tendencies of the two friends more observable than in their notions on philosophical subjects: Lord Byron being, with the great bulk of mankind, a believer in the existence of matter and evil, while Shelley so far refined upon the theory of Berkeley, as not only to resolve the whole of creation into spirit, but to add also to this immaterial system, some pervading principle, some

abstract nonentity of love and beauty—of which, as a substitute at least for Deity—the philosophic bishop had never dreamed."

The difference existing between their philosophical doctrines was that which existed between the two most opposed systems of spiritualism and pantheism.

I said that Shelley, notwithstanding his originality of mind, was destined, through the mobility of his impressions, to be easily influenced by what he read. The study of Plato and of Spinoza had already given to his metaphysical views a different bent. But before his transition from atheism to a mystical pantheism, before finding God in all things, after having sought him in vain everywhere, before considering himself to be a fragment of a chosen existence, and before shutting himself up in a kind of mysticism which did actually absorb him at a later period, he confined himself to a positive worship of nature, which appeared to him then in the glorious shape of the mountains and lakes of Helvetia. Wordsworth was his oracle, and thus cultivating a poetry which Deified nature, Shelley, in reality, remained at heart an atheist, and doubtless tried to imbue Byron with his enthusiasm and with his opinions.

Himself greatly delighted with the beauties of the scenery in the midst of which they lived, and, as he was wont to say in laughter, having received many large doses of Wordsworth from Shelley, Lord Byron wrote several stanzas in which the same enthusiasm may be met with, recorded in terms almost of adoration.

It was only a poetical form, however, a poetical illusion, which was succeeded by stanzas in which God himself as our creator, was loudly proclaimed.

If in the seventy-second and following stanzas of the third canto, opinions were expressed which savoured of pantheistic tendencies, they were at once followed by some such as these :—

> "All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
> But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
> And silent, as we stand in thought too deep:—
> All heaven and earth are still: from the high host
> Of stars to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
> All is concenter'd in a life intense,
> Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
> But hath a part of being, and a sense
> Of that which is of all *Creator* and *Defence*."

And again, on viewing the Alps, he writes the poem of 'Manfred,' in which his belief in a One God, and Creator, is expressed in sublime lines. His repugnance to atheism and to materialism is testified not only in his poetry, but also by his own actions.

On reaching Montauvert with his friend Hobhouse, and on the point of ascending Mont Blanc with him, he found Shelley's name in the register of the travellers, and under it the qualification of "atheist" written in Shelley's own hand. Lord Byron at once scratched it out. But on reading, a little below, a remark by another traveller, who had justly rebuked Shelley's folly, Byron added the words, "The appellation is well deserved."

He soon after left the Alps; and came to Italy, without his views, either philosophical or religious, being in the least altered by the seductions of "that serpent," as he jokingly denominated Shelley.

We shall now follow him, step by step, until the end of his life, and we shall see whether he will not show himself stanch in his adherence to great principles. Lord Byron had enough of systems, and was

disgusted with their absurdity, their proud dogmatical views, and their intolerant spirit. Whenever the great questions of life and the dictates of the soul occupy his thoughts, either in the silence of the night or in the absence of passion, we shall see him set himself resolutely to the examination of his own conscience, for the purpose of arriving at truth and justice. The answers which his powerful reasoning suggested to him served to determine and confirm his faith in God.

On leaving Geneva, Lord Byron proceeded to Milan. "One day," says Mr. Stendhall, who knew Lord Byron at Milan, in 1817, and saw a great deal of him there, "some people alluded to a couplet from the 'Aminta' of Tasso, in which the poet appears to take credit to himself for being an unbeliever, and expresses it in the lines which may thus be translated:—

'Listen, O my son, to the thunder as it rolls.
But what is it to us what Jupiter does up there?
Let us rejoice down here if betroubled above;
Let the common herd of mortals dread his blows:
And let the world go to ruin, I will only think
Of what pleases me; and if I become dust again,
I shall only be what I have already been.'

Lord Byron says that these lines were written under the influence of spleen. A belief in the existence of a superior Being was a necessity for the fiery and tender nature of Tasso. He was, besides, far too Platonic to try to reconcile such contrary opinions. When he wrote those lines, he probably was in want of a piece of bread and a mistress."

Lord Byron reached Venice, and there his most agreeable hours and days were spent with Padre Pasquale, in the convent of the Armenian priests.

He also wrote, at this time, the sublimely moral poem entitled 'Manfred,' in which he renders justice to the existence of God, to the free will of man, the abuse of which has resulted in the loss of 'Manfred,' and retraces, in splendid lines, all theduties incumbent upon man, together with the limits which he is not allowed to pass. The apparition of his lovely and young victim, the uncertainty of her happiness, which causes Manfred's greatest grief, and finally his supplication to her that he may know whether she is enjoying eternal bliss,

. . . . . "that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—" . . . . .

the whole bears the impress of a truly religious spirit.

He shortly afterwards visited Rome, and finding himself in presence of St. Peter's, he again gave expression to his religious sentiments, in the admirable fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' which Englishmen do not hesitate to acknowledge as the finest poem which ever came from mortal hands.

TO ST. PETER.

Stanza 153.

* * * * * *

"Christ's mighty shrine above his martyr's tomb!"

Stanza 154.

"But thou, of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee.
* * * * * *
Power, glory, strength, and beauty all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled."

From Venice he went on to Ravenna. The persecution to which he was subjected, on the ground of religion and morality, on account of the publication of the two first cantos of 'Don Juan,' was then at its

height, and he was tormented in every possible way. It was useless for him to protest, in verse, in prose, by letter, or by words, against the accusation of his being an atheist and a sceptic. It was asserted that 'Manfred' was the expression of his doubts upon the dispensation of Providence, and that his other poems, all more or less imbued with passion, had tendencies of an irreverent nature in respect to the Divinity. His two famous stanzas in 'Childe Harold' were always held up to him by the innumerable army of hypocrites and wicked people who assailed him.

All were not hypocrites, however; some were his enemies in good faith, but were blinded by sectarian prejudices. Among these was an Irishman of the name of Mulock, author of a work entitled 'Atheism Answered.' Lord Byron one day at Ravenna received a paper from the editor of the 'Bologna Telegraph,' with extracts from this work, in which "there is a long eulogium of" his "poetry, and a great *compatimento* for" his "misery" on account of his being a sceptic and an unbeliever in Christ; "although," says Mr. Mulock, "his bold scepticism is far preferable to the pharisaical parodists of the religion of the Gospel, who preach and persecute with an equally intolerant spirit."

Lord Byron, writing that day to Murray, says:—

"I never could understand what they mean by accusing me of irreligion. They may, however, have it their own way. This gentleman seems to be my great admirer, so I take what he says in good part, as he evidently intends kindness, to which I can't accuse myself of being insensible."

In the evening he talked to and laughed a good

deal with the Countess Guiccioli about this great *compatimento*,* treating it as a great oddity. A few months later, Moore having written to him about this same Mr. Mulock, and told him that that gentleman was giving lectures upon religion, Lord Byron, whilst riding with the young Count G—— in the forest of Ravenna, made his profession of faith, and finding his youthful companion not quite orthodox, said to him: "The nature of classical and philosophical studies generally paralyses all logical minds, and that is why many young heads leave college unbelievers: you are even still more so, because you mix up your religious views with your political antipathies. As for me, in my early youth, when I left college, where I had to bow to very superior and stronger minds who themselves were under various evil influences of college and of youth, I was more than heterodox. Time and reflection have changed my mind upon these subjects, and I consider Atheism as a folly. As for Catholicism, so little is it objectionable to me, that I wish my daughter to be brought up in that religion, and some day to marry a Catholic. If Catholicism, after all, suggests difficulties of a nature which it is difficult for reason to get over, are these less great than those which Protestantism creates? Are not all the mysteries common to both creeds? Catholicism at least offers the consolation of Purgatory, of the Sacraments, of absolution and forgiveness; whereas Protestantism is barren of consolation for the soul."

This open profession of faith, expressed by such a man as Lord Byron, in a calm and dispassionate tone,

* Sympathy.

produced a great impression upon the young Count. It had been so much the fashion to consider him as irreligious, that one would say that even his friends were of the same opinion. Some time had elapsed since Byron had sent a translation from the Armenian of one of the Epistles of St. Paul, which Murray delayed in publishing. Rather annoyed by this delay, Byron wrote to him on the 9th of October, 1821, from Ravenna :—

"The Epistle of St. Paul, which I translated from the Armenian, for what reason have you kept it back, though you published that stuff which gave rise to the 'Vampire'? Is it because you are afraid to print anything in opposition to the cant of the 'Quarterly' about Manicheism? Let me have a proof of that Epistle directly. I am a better Christian than those parsons of yours, though not paid for being so."

If Byron hated fanatical and persecuting clergymen, he, on the other hand, entertained great regard for priests of every denomination, when he knew that they exercised their functions without fanaticism and in a tolerant spirit. Among his dearest and earliest friends he placed two young clergymen,* both distinguished in their profession by their piety and their attainments. At Ravenna, his alms in favour of churches and monasteries were very liberal. If the organ were not in order, if the steeple wanted repairs, Lord Byron's pecuniary assistance was asked for, and he ever gave liberally though it was for the benefit of the Catholic community. He was always indignant at his writings, especially if connected

* The Rev. Mr. Hodgson and the Rev. Mr. Harness.

with religion, being sent back to him by Murray with alterations to which he was no party. On one occasion he reproached him in the following terms :—

"In referring to the mistake in stanza 132, I take the opportunity to desire that in future, in all parts of my writings referring to religion, you will be more careful, and not forget that it is possible that in addressing the Deity a blunder may become a blasphemy: and I do not choose to suffer such infamous perversions of my words or of my intentions. I saw the canto by accident."

His dearest paternal care was the religious education to be given to his natural daughter, Allegra, who was with him at Ravenna. In writing to Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, to give them tidings of his dear Allegra, whom he had sent to a convent in Romagna to be educated there, he declares that in presence of the political disquietude which reigned in the Romagna, he thought he could not do better than send his child to that convent. Here "she would receive a little instruction, and some notions of morality and the principles of religion."

Moore adds to this letter a note, which runs thus :—

"With such anxiety did he look to this essential part of his daughter's education, that notwithstanding the many advantages she was sure to derive from the kind and feminine superintendence of Mrs. Shelley, his apprehensions lest her feelings upon religious subjects might be disturbed by the conversation of Shelley himself prevented him from allowing her to remain under his friend's roof."

The Bible, as is well known, constituted his favourite reading. Often did he find in the magnificent poetry of the Bible matter for inspiration. His 'Hebrew Melodies' prove it, and as for the Book of Job, he used to say that it was far too sublime for him even to attempt to translate it, as he would have wished. Towards the end of his stay at Ravenna, when his genius was most fertile and almost superhuman — (he wrote five dramas and many other admirable poems in fifteen months, that is to say, in less time than it requires to copy them)—two biblical subjects inspired his muse: 'Cain,' and 'Heaven and Earth.' Both were admirably suited to his pen. He naturally treated them as a philosopher, but without any preconceived notion of making any religious converts. His enemies nevertheless seized hold of these pieces, to incriminate him and impugn his religious belief. I have spoken elsewhere * of that truly scandalous persecution. I will only add here that Moore, timid as he usually was when he had to face an unpopularity which came from high quarters, and alarmed by all the cries proceeding from party spirit, wrote to approve the beauty of the poem in enthusiastic terms, but disapproved of the harm which some doubts expressed therein might produce. Byron replied :—

"There is nothing against the immortality of the soul in 'Cain,' that I recollect. I hold no such opinions; but in a drama the first rebel and the first murderer must be made to talk according to his character."

And in another letter he says, with regard to the same subject :—

* Article on his Life in Italy and at Pisa.

"With respect to religion, can I never convince you that I have no such opinions as the characters in that drama, which seem to have frightened everybody? Yet they are nothing to the expressions in Goethe's 'Faust' (which are ten times hardier), and not a whit more bold than those of Milton's 'Satan.' My ideas of character may run away with me: like all imaginative men, I, of course, embody myself with the character while I draw it, but not a moment after the pen is from off the paper.

"I am no enemy to religion, but the contrary. As a proof, I am educating my natural daughter a strict Catholic in a convent of Romagna, for I think people can never have enough of religion, if they are to have any. I incline myself very much to the Catholic doctrines; but if I am to write a drama, I must make my characters speak as I conceive them likely to argue."

The sympathy of persons sincerely religious was extremely agreeable to him. A short time after he had left Ravenna for Pisa, a Mr. John Sheppard sent him a prayer he had found among the papers belonging to his young wife, whom he had lost some two years before. Lord Byron thanked him in a beautiful letter, in which he consoled the distressed husband by assuring him of his belief in immortality, and of his confidence that he would again see the worthy person whom himself he could not but admire, for her virtues and her pure and simple piety.

"I am obliged to you," he added, "for your good wishes, and more than obliged by the extract from the papers of the beloved object whose qualities you

have so well described in a few words. I can assure you that all the fame which ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance, would never weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view I would not exchange the prayers of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated upon a living head. Do me at least the justice to suppose that

'Video meliora proboque,'

however the *deteriora sequor* may have been applied to my conduct.

"BYRON."

Not only did Lord Byron prevent his reason being influenced by the arguments of others, but even by the dictates of his own heart. Both his mind and his heart were perfectly independent of one another, nay often took different directions. It was to him unquestionably painful to see such a division, but it was the fatal result of the excessive development of the powers of each. In the same letter to Mr. Sheppard which we have quoted, and which is full of gratitude for the prayers which the young wife had addressed to heaven to obtain his conversion, Byron adds:—

"A man's creed does not depend upon himself: who can say, 'I will believe this, that, or the other'? and, least of all, that which he least can comprehend."

Walter Scott once told him in London that he was convinced he would daily become more and more religious.

"What!" vehemently replied Lord Byron, "do you believe that I could become bigoted?"

"No," said Walter Scott, "I only think that the influence of some great mind might modify your religious views."

Galt says the same thing:—

"A mind like Byron's," says he, "was little susceptible of being impressed by the reasonings of ordinary men. Truth, in visiting him, must come accompanied by every kind of solemnity, and preceded by respect and reverence. A marked superiority, a recognised celebrity, were indispensable to command his sincere attention."

Without taking implicitly for granted the rather exaggerated opinion of Galt with respect to Lord Byron, we must allow that the great poet's attention could not be captivated by reasonings of a superficial kind, but could be influenced only by great learning, and powerful arguments which had conviction for their basis.

But he might have found at Pisa the great intellectual influence spoken of, for he found Shelley there. Seeing him every day, in the quiet intimacy which the delightful sojourn in Tuscany procured for them, it was easy for both to forget all the troubles of an agitated and political existence, and only to think about the world of spirits. Shelley had every opportunity for inculcating his doctrines, having, or rather being able to exercise, the most exclusive influence upon Byron's mind. Did he exercise that influence, and if he did not, for what reason?

We have said that Shelley, notwithstanding his original views, his extreme readiness to be impressed

by everything he heard and saw, was often the victim of his reading. He had read a great deal, and though since he had written the 'Apology for Atheism' he had not changed his mind as to his metaphysical tenets, nevertheless the study of the German philosophy, and especially of Spinoza's, had produced on him a revolution of ideas. From a materialistic atheism, which denies the existence of God in everything, he had gone over to a kind of mystic pantheism, which supposes God to be everywhere and in everything. This species of pantheism is in reality but a disguised atheism, but which, in such a man as Shelley, appeared more in the actions of his life as a pervading devotion than an impious belief. Shelley ever adored all that is beautiful, true, and holy. From this it followed that his doctrines, far from appearing to be the result of pride, seemed, on the contrary, to be founded upon humility, sacrifice, and devotion to humanity. If the mystic pantheism of Spinoza could have found a living justification of its silly principles, and an excuse for its want of power, Shelley would have supplied both. The individuality, always more or less egotistical, which is prominent in the word *ego*, seemed positively to have ceased to exist with him: one would have said that he almost already felt himself absorbed in that universal and divine substance, which is the God of Spinoza. If in a century like ours such a philosophy as Eclecticism could return and become again a doctrinal institution, Shelley might have personified it. He had so sacrificed his individuality to chimeras of all kinds, that he appeared to consider himself a mere phenomenon, and to look

upon the external world as mere fiction, in order that the impossible and never-to-be-found divinity of his dreams might occupy all the space.

He was perhaps the meekest, most generous, and the most modest of the creatures of the true God, whom he yet persistently refused to recognise as his Creator.

If, however, there was no impiety in his irreligion, no real pride in his pride, there existed that weakness, if I may use the word, peculiar to a brain which cannot grasp at reality, but adheres to a chimera as a basis for its arguments.

"His works," says Galt, "are soiled by the false judgments proceeding from a mind which made him look at everything in a false light, and it must be allowed that that mind was either troubled or defective by nature."

If this opinion is too severe, it is, however, certain that Shelley had so exalted an imagination that his judgment suffered by it. As he is in his works, so was he in all the commonest actions of his life. A few anecdotes will serve to make him still better known.

Once, at Pisa, he went to see Count Gamba, who expected him, for some charitable purpose which they were to agree upon together. A violent storm burst forth suddenly, and the wind tore a tile from a roof, and caused it to fall on Shelley's head. The blow was very great, and his forehead was covered with blood. This, however, did not in the least prevent his proceeding on his way. When Count Gamba saw him in this state he was much alarmed, and asked him how it had occurred. Shelley replied quite calmly, passing his hand over his head, just as if he had forgotten all about it, that it was true that the wind had blown

down a tile which had fallen on his head, but that he would be taken care of later upon his return home. Shelley was not rich, but whenever he went to his banker's it was necessary that no one should require his assistance, in order that the money which he had gone to fetch should come home untouched. As, on one occasion, he was returning from a visit to his banker's some one at the door of his house asked for assistance. Shelley hastily got up the stairs, and throwing down his gold and notes on the floor, rushed suddenly away, crying out to Mrs. Shelley, "There pick it all up." This the lady did as well as she could, for she was a woman of order, and as much attached to the reality of things as her husband was wanting in that particular.

I shall not multiply these characteristic instances of the man, but will only add that such incidents were by no means uncommon, nay, that they were matters of daily occurrence.

There was almost a kind of analogy in his life between him and Spinoza. Notwithstanding their great qualities and merits, both were hated and persecuted for sufficiently just motives, — society having the right of repudiating doctrines which tend to its destruction; but both were persecuted in undue and unfair proportions. Both had weak and sickly constitutions. Both had great and generous souls. Both endeavoured to understand the laws which govern the destiny of the world, without ever being subject to their moral consequences, and both devoted themselves to be practically useful to their fellow-creatures—a contradiction which was the effect of their too generous minds.

In Shelley's heart the dominant wish was to see society entirely reorganized. The sight of human miseries and infirmities distressed him to the greatest degree; but, too modest himself to believe that he was called upon to take the initiative, and inaugurate a new era of good government and fresh laws for the benefit of humanity, he would have been pleased to see such a genius as Byron take the initiative in this undertaking. "He can be the regenerator of his country," wrote Shelley, speaking of Byron, in 1818, at Venice.

Shelley therefore did his best to influence Lord Byron. But the latter hated discussions: he could not bear entering into philosophical speculation at times when his soul craved the consolations of friendship and his mind a little rest. He was quite insensible to reasonings, which often appear sublime because they are clothed in words incomprehensible to those who have not sought to understand their meaning. But he made an exception in favour of Shelley. He knew that he could not shake his faith in a doctrine founded upon illusions, by his incredulity; but he listened to him with pleasure, not only on account of Shelley's good faith and sincerity of meaning, but also because he argued upon false data with such talent and originality that he was both interested and amused. But with all his great and noble qualities was it to be expected that Lord Byron would fall into the doctrines proffered by pantheists? Doctrines rejected by reason, which wound the heart, are opposed to the most imperative necessities of our nature, and only bring desolation to our minds.

Lord Byron had examined every kind and species

of philosophy by the light of common sense, and by the instinct of his genius: the result had been to make him compassionate towards the vain weaknesses of the human understanding, and to convince him that all systems which have hypothesis as ground-work are illusions, and consequently likely to perish with their authors.

Pantheism in particular was odious to him, and he esteemed it to be the greatest of absurdities. He made no difference between the Pantheism "absolute," which mixes up that which is infinite with that which is finite, and that which struggles in vain to keep clear of Atheism.

In an age like ours, when the common tendency is of a materialistic, character, such as almost to defy the power of man, mysticism has little or no *locus standi.* Shelley's opinions, on account of their appearance of spiritualism, were most likely of any to interest Byron; but, founded as they are upon fancy, could they please him? Could he possibly consent to lose his individuality, deny his own freedom of will, all responsibility of action, and hence all his privileges, his future existence, and all principles of morality? Could he possibly admit that the doctrine which prescribed these sacrifices was better than any other? Even with the best intentions, could any of the essential, moral, and holy principles of nature be introduced into such a system? Byron could not but condemn it, and he attributed all Shelley's views to the aberrations of a mind which is happier when it dreams than when it denies.

Here, then, was the cause of his being inaccessible to Shelley's arguments. He used sometimes to ex-

claim, "Why Shelley appears to me to be mad with his metaphysics." This he one day repeated to Count Gamba at Pisa, as Shelley walked out and he came in. "We have been discussing metaphysics," said he: "what trash in all these systems! Say what they will, mystery for mystery, I still find that of the Creation the most reasonable of any."

He made no disguise of the difficulties which he found in admitting the doctrine of a God, Creator of the world, and entirely distinct from it; but he added, "I prefer even that mystery to the contradictions by which other systems endeavour to replace it." He certainly found that in the mystery of Creation there existed the proof of the weakness of our minds, but he declared that Pantheism had to explain absurdities far too evident for a logical mind to adopt its tenets. "They find," said he, "that reason is more easily satisfied with a system of unity like theirs, in which all is derived from one principle only: may be, but what do we ask of truth? why all our never-ceasing efforts in its pursuit? Is it merely that we may exercise the mind, and make truth the toy of our imagination? Impossible. At any rate it would be a secret to which, as yet, God has not given us any clue. But in doing this, in constantly placing the phenomena of creation before us without their causes or without ever explaining them, and at the same time instilling into our souls an insatiable thirst for truth, the Almighty has placed within us a voiee which at times reminds us that He is preparing some surprise for us; and we trust that that surprise may be a happy one."

Poor Shelley lost his time with Byron. But, how-

ever much Byron objected to his doctrines, he had no similar objection to Shelley himself, for whom he professed a great respect and admiration. He grieved to find so noble an intellect the victim of hallucination which entirely blinded him to the perception of truth. Shelley, however, did not despair of succeeding in making Byron some day give up what he termed his philosophical errors, and his persistency earned for him the appellation of "serpent" which Byron gave him in jest. This persistency, which at the same time indicates the merit of Byron's resistance, has often been mentioned by Shelley himself. Writing from Pisa to a friend in England, a very few days before his death, and alluding to a letter from Moore which Byron had shown him, and wherein 'Cain' was attributed to the influence which he (Shelley) had evidently exercised over Byron, he said, "Pray assure Moore that in a philosophical point of view I have not the slightest influence over Byron; if I had, be sure I should use it for the purpose of uprooting his delusions and his errors. He had conceived 'Cain' many years ago, and he had already commenced writing it when I saw him last year at Ravenna. How happy I should be could I attribute to myself, even indirectly, a part in that immortal work!"

Moore wrote to Byron on the same subject a little later, and received the following reply:—"As for poor Shelley, who also frightens you and the world, he is, to my knowledge, the least egotistical and kindest of men. I know no one who has so sacrificed both fortune and sentiments for the good of others; as for his speculative opinions, we have none in common, nor do I wish to have any."

All the poems which he wrote at this time, and which admitted of his introducing the religious element either purposely or accidentally into them, prove one and all that his mind, as regards religion, was as we have shown it to be. This is particularly noticeable in his mystery called 'Heaven and Earth;' but the same remark is applicable to others, such as the 'Island,' and even to some passages in 'Don Juan.' 'Heaven and Earth'—a poem which appeared about this time, and which he styled 'A Mystery'—is a biblical poem in which all the thoughts agree with the Book of Genesis, and "which was inspired," says Galt, "by a mind both serious and patriarchal, and is an echo of the oracles of Adam and of Melchisedec." In this work he exhibits as much veneration for scriptural theology as Milton himself. In the 'Island,' which he wrote at Genoa, there are passages which penetrate the soul with so religious a feeling, that Benjamin Constant, in reading it, and indignant at hearing Byron called an unbeliever, exclaimed in his work on religion, "I am assured that there are men who accuse Lord Byron of atheism and impiety. There is more religion in the twelve lines which I have quoted than in the past, present, and future writings of all his detractors put together."

Even in 'Don Juan,' in that admirable satire which, not being rightly understood, has given rise to so many calumnies, he says, after having spoken in the fifteenth canto of the moral greatness of various men, and amongst others of Socrates:

"And thou, Diviner still,
Whose lot it is by man to be mistaken,
And thy pure creed made sanction of all ill?

Redeeming worlds to be by bigots shaken,
How was thy toil rewarded?"

At the end of this stanza he wrote the following note:—

"As it is necessary in these times to avoid ambiguity, I say that I mean by 'Diviner still,' Christ. If ever God was man—or man God—he was both. I never arraigned his creed, but the use or abuse made of it. Mr. Canning one day quoted Christianity to sanction negro slavery, and Mr. Wilberforce had little to say in reply. And was Christ crucified that black men might be scourged? If so, he had better been born a Mulatto, to give both colours an equal chance of freedom, or at least salvation."

Notwithstanding these beautiful lines, which were equally professions of faith, England, instead of doing Byron justice, continued more than ever to persecute him.

Shortly afterwards he embarked at Genoa for Greece, and halted at Cephalonia. He there made the acquaintance of a young Scotchman, named Kennedy, who was attached as doctor to the Greek army. Before taking to medicine this young man had studied law, with the intention of going to the Edinburgh bar. He was so deeply convinced of the truths of Christianity, and so familiar with its teaching, that he would fain have imparted his belief to everyone he met. From his position he found himself among a host of young officers, mostly Scotch, and all more or less lax in their religious practices. Among these, however, he met with four who consented to listen to his explanation of the doctrines of Christianity. As their principal challenge was to

show proofs that the Bible was of divine origin, he accepted the challenge in the hope of making some conversions.

One of these officers informed Lord Byron of this projected meeting, and Byron, from the interest which he always took in the subject which was to be their ground of discussion, expressed a wish to be present. "You know," said he, "that I am looked upon as a black sheep, and yet I am not as black as the world makes me out, nor worse than others,"— words, which, from the fact of his rarely doing himself justice, were noteworthy in his mouth.

Under such auspices, then, was Kennedy fortunate enough to open his discussion, and Lord Byron was present in company of the young Count Gamba and Dr. Bruno.

Mr. Kennedy has given a detailed account of this meeting, as also of his subsequent conversations with Lord Byron. We will mention some of them here, because they show Lord Byron's religious opinions in the latter portion of his life. Mr. Kennedy had made a condition that he should be allowed to speak, without being interrupted, but at various intervals, for twelve hours. This condition, however, was soon set aside, and then Lord Byron joined the conversation. After exciting admiration by his patient silence, he astounded every one as an interlocutor. If Kennedy was well versed in the Scriptures, Lord Byron was not less so, and even able to correct a misquotation from Holy Writ. The direct object of the meeting was to prove that the Scriptures contained the genuine and direct revelation of God's will. Mr. Kennedy, however, becoming a

little entangled in a series of quotations, which had not the force that was required to prove his statements, and, seeing that a little impatience betrayed itself among the audience, could not resist showing some temper, and accusing his hearers of ignorance. "Strange accusation, when applied to Lord Byron," says Galt. Lord Byron, who had come there to be interested, and to learn, did not notice the taunt of Mr. Kennedy, but merely remarked, "that all that can be desired is to be convinced of the truth of the Bible, as containing really the word of God; for if this is sincerely believed, it must follow, as a necessary consequence, that one must believe all the doctrines contained in it."

He then added, that in his youth he had been brought up by his mother in very strict religious principles; had read a large number of theological works, and that Barrow's writings had most pleased him; that he regularly went to church, that he was by no means an unbeliever who denied the Scriptures, and wished to grope in atheism; but, on the contrary, that all his wish was to increase his belief, as half-convictions made him wretched. He declared, however, that he could not thoroughly understand the Scriptures. He also added, that he entertained the highest respect for, and confidence in, those who believed conscientiously; but that he had met with many whose conduct differed from the principles they professed simply from interested motives, and esteemed the number of those who really believed in the Scriptures to be very small. He asked him about his opinion as to various writers against religion, and amongst others of Sir W. Hamilton, Bel-

lamy, and Warburton, who pretend that the Jews had no notion of a future existence. He confessed that the sight of so much evil was a difficulty to him, which he could not explain, and which made him question the perfect goodness of the Creator. He dwelt upon this argument a long time, exhibiting as much tenderness of heart as force of reasoning. Kennedy's answers were weak, as must be those of one who denies the measure of evil, in order that he may not be compassionate towards it, and who promises a reward in after life to escape the necessity of its being bestowed in the present. In reply Lord Byron pointed to moral and physical evil which exists among savages, to whom Scripture is unknown, and who are bereft of all the means of becoming civilized people. Why are they deprived of these gifts of God? and what is to be the ultimate fate of Pagans? He quoted several objections made to our Lord by the apostles; mentioned prophecies which had never been fulfilled, and spoke of the consequences of religious wars. Kennedy replied with much ability, and even with a certain degree of eloquence, and prudently made use of the ordinary theological arguments. But to influence such a mind as Byron's more was required. In the search after truth, he looked for hard logic, and eloquence was not required by him. Fénélon could not have persuaded him; but Descartes might have influenced him. He preferred, in fact, in such arguments, the method of the geometrician to that of the artist; the one uses truth to arrive at truth, the other makes use of the beautiful only, to arrive at the same end.

The meeting lasted four hours, and created much

sensation in the island, and every one agreed in praising Lord Byron's great knowledge of the Scriptures, joined to his moderation and modesty. Kennedy, however, a little irritated by the superiority granted to his adversary, did his best to dissipate the impression produced by it. He went so far, as to reproach his friends for having allowed themselves to be blinded by the rank, the celebrity, and the prestige of Lord Byron. "His theological knowledge being," said he, "in reality quite ordinary and superficial." This meeting was the only one in which Lord Byron took a part, for he left Argostoli for Metaxata.

The meetings continued, however, for some time longer, and Kennedy showed a zeal which deserved to meet with better success. He brought before his audience with talent every possible reasoning in favour of orthodoxy; but his audience, composed of young men, were far too engrossed with worldly occupations to be caught by the ardour of their master's zeal. Disappointed at not seeing Lord Byron again among them, they all deserted Kennedy's lectures just at the time when he was going to speak of miracles and prophesies, the subject of all others upon which he had built his greatest hopes. Not only did they desert the hall, but actually overwhelmed the speaker with mockery. Some declared they would put off their conversion to a more advanced age; others actually maintained that they had less faith than before.

Meanwhile Kennedy, though dissappointed in his religious enthusiasm on the one hand, received some consolation on the other, at the hands of Lord Byron,

who had not forgotten him, and who often enquired after him though he had not been convinced by his arguments. Kennedy also had conceived a great liking for Byron. He admired in the poet all his graceful qualities and his unequalled talents. He wished, but dared not, yet visit Lord Byron. Meeting, however, Count Gamba at Argostoli on one occasion, and hearing from him that Byron was on the point of departure for Continental Greece, he resolved to pay him a visit, "as much," said he, "to show the respect which is due to such a man, as to satisfy one's own curiosity in seeing and hearing so distinguished a person."

Byron received him with his natural cordiality. He made him stay to dinner with him, and thus gave him the opportunity of entering into a long conversation. Kennedy, who never lost sight of his mission of proselytism, brought the conversation round to the object of his wishes, and prefaced his arguments by saying that he was prepared to talk upon the matter; but that he had no doubt lost his time, since it was not likely that his lordship would consider these subjects urgent at that moment. Byron smiled and replied, "It is true that at the present time I have not given that important subject all my attention, but I should nevertheless be curious to know the motives which not only have convinced you, as a man of sense and reflexion, as you undoubtedly are, of the truth of religion, but also have induced you to profess Christianity with such zeal."

"If there had been men," said Kennedy, "who had rejected Christianity, there were greater men still who had accepted it; but to adopt a system merely because

others have adopted it is not to act rationally, unless it is proved that the great minds which adopted it were mistaken."

"But I have not the slightest desire," answered Byron, "to reject a doctrine without having investigated it. Quite the contrary; I wish to believe, because I feel extremely unhappy in a state of uncertainty as to what I am to believe."

Kennedy having told him then that to obtain the grace of faith, he should pray humbly for it, Byron replied, that prayer does not consist in the act of kneeling or of repeating certain words in a solemn manner: "devotion is the affection of the heart, and that I possess, for when I look at the marvels of creation I bow before the Majesty of Heaven, and when I experience the delights of life, health, and happiness, then my heart dilates in gratitude towards God for all His blessings."

"That is not sufficient," continued the Doctor. "I should wish your Lordship to read the Bible with the greatest attention, having prayed earnestly before that the Almighty may grant you the grace to understand it. For, however great your talents, the book will be a sealed letter to you unless the Holy Spirit inspires you."

"I read the Bible more than you think," said Byron. "I have a Bible which my sister, who is goodness itself, gave me, and I often peruse it."

He then went into his bedroom, and brought out a handsomely bound pocket Bible which he showed the Doctor. The latter advised his continuing to read it, but expressed his surprise that Byron should not have better understood it. He looked out several

passages in which it is enjoined that we should pray with humility if we wish to understand the truth of the Gospel; and where it is expressly said that no human wisdom can fathom these truths; but that God alone can reveal them to us, and enlighten our understanding; that we must not scrutinize His acts, but be submissive as children to His will; and that, as obedience through the sin of our first parents, and our own evil inclinations, has become for us a positive difficulty, we must change our hearts before we can obey or take pleasure in obeying the commandments of our Lord God; and, finally, that all, whatever the rank of each, are subject to the necessity of obedience.

Byron's occupations and ideas at that time were not quite in accordance with the nature of these holy words, but he received them with his usual kind and modest manner, because they came from one who was sincere. He only replied, that, as to the wickedness of the world, he was quite of his opinion, as he had found it in every class of society; but that the doctrines which he had put forth would oblige him to plunge into all the problems respecting the Old Testament and original sin, which many learned persons, as good Christians as Dr. Kennedy, did not hesitate to reject. He then showed the Doctor, in answer to the latter's rather intolerant assertion of the omnipotence of the Bible, how conversant he was with the subject by quoting several Christian authors who thought differently. He quoted Bishop Watson, who, whilst professing Christianity, did not attribute such authority to the contents of the Bible. He also mentioned the Waldenses, who were such good

Christians that they were called "the true Church of Christ," but who, nevertheless, looked upon the Bible as merely the history of the Jews. He then showed that the book of Genesis was considered by many Doctors of Divinity as a mere symbol or allegory. He took up the defence of Gibbon against Kennedy's insinuation that the great historian had maliciously and intentionally kept back the truth; he quoted Warburton as a man whose ingenious theories have found much favour with many learned persons; finally, he proved to the Doctor that, in any case, he could not himself be accused of ignorance of the subject.

This conversation afforded him the opportunity also of refuting the accusation brought against him by some of his numerous enemies; namely, that of having a tendency to the doctrines of Manicheism. Kennedy having said that the spirit of evil, as well as the angels, is subject to the will of God, Lord Byron replied,—

"If received in a literal sense, I find that it gives one a far higher notion of God's majesty, power, and wisdom, if we believe that the spirit of evil is really subject to the will of the Almighty, and is as easily controlled by Him as the elements follow the respective laws which He has made for them."

Byron could not bear anything which took away from the greatness of the Divinity, and his words all tended to replace the Divinity in that incomprehensible space where He must be silently acknowledged and adored. Their conversation extended to other points of religious belief. Whilst the Doctor, taking the Bible to be the salvation of mankind,

indulged in exaggerated and intolerant condemnation of the Catholic Church, which he called an abominable hierarchy not less to be regretted than Deism and Socinianism, Byron again displayed a spirit of toleration and moderation. Though he disapproved of the Doctor's language, he did not contradict him, believing him to be sincere in his recriminations, but brought back the conversation to that point from which common sense should never depart. He deplored with him existing hypocrisies and superstitions, which he looked upon as the cause of the unbelief of many in the existence of God; but he added, that it was not confined to the Continent only, but likewise existed in England. Instead of resting his hopes upon the Bible, he said that he knew the Scriptures well enough "to be sure that if the spirit of meekness and goodness which the religion of the Gospel contains were put into practice by men, there would certainly be a marvellous change in this wicked world;" and he finished by saying, that as for himself he had, as a rule, ever respected those who believed conscientiously, whatever that belief might be; in the same manner as he detested from his heart hypocrites of all kinds, and especially hypocrites in religion.

He then changed the topic of conversation, and turned it to literature. All he said on that subject is so interesting that I reserve the record of it to another chapter. The Doctor, however, soon resumed the former subject of their conversation, and, more in the spirit of a missionary than a philosopher, he went on to recommend the study of Christianity, which he said was summed up entirely in the Scriptures.

"But what will you have me do?" said Byron. "I do not reject the doctrines of Christianity, I only ask a few more proofs to profess them sincerely. I do not believe myself to be the vile Christian which many—to whom I have never done any harm, and many of whom do not even know me—strenuously assert that I am, and attack me violently in consequence."

The Doctor insisted.

"But," said Byron, "you go too fast. There are many points still to be cleared up, and when these shall have been explained, I shall then examine what you tell me."

"What are those difficulties?" replied the Doctor. "If the subject is important, why delay its explanation? You have time; reason upon it; reflect. You have the means of disposing of the difficulty at your command."

"True," answered Byron, "but I am the slave of circumstances, and the sphere in which I live is not likely to make me consider the subject."

As the Doctor became more urgent, Byron said—

"How will you have me begin?"

"Begin this very night to pray to God that he may forgive you your sins, and may grant you grace to know the truth. If you pray, and read your Bible with purity of intention, the result must be that which we so ardently wish for."

"Well, yes," replied Byron, "I will certainly study these matters with attention."

"But your Lordship must bear in mind, that you should not be discouraged, even were your doubts and difficulties to increase; for nothing can be under-

stood without sufficient time and pains. You must weigh conscientiously each argument, and continue to pray to God, in whom at least you believe, to give you the necessary understanding."

"Why then," asked Byron, "increase the difficulties, when they are already so great?"

The Doctor then took the mystery of the Trinity as an example, and spoke of it as a man who has faith and accepts the mystery as a revealed dogma.

"It is not the province of man," said he, "to comprehend or analyse the nature of an existence which is entirely spiritual, such as that of the Divinity; but we must accept it, and believe in it, because it has been revealed to us, being fully convinced that man in his present state will never be able to fathom such mysteries."

He not only blamed those who wish to explain all things, but likewise the presumption of certain theologians in mixing up their own arguments with the revelations of Scripture in order to prove the unity in the Trinity, and who speculate upon the attributes of the Diety to ascertain the relative mode of existence of each of the three persons who compose the Trinity. "They must fall," he added, "or lead others to a similar end." Hence he concluded that mysteries should be believed in implicitly, as children believe fully what their parents tell them.

"I therefore advise your Lordship," said he, "to put aside all difficult subjects,—such as the origin of sin, the fall of man, the nature of the Trinity, the mystery of predestination, &c.,—and to study Christianity not in books of theology, which, even the best, are all more or less imperfect, but in the

careful examination of the Scriptures. By comparing each part of it, you will at last find a harmony so great in all its constituent parts, and so much wisdom in its entire whole, that you will no longer be able to doubt its divine origin, and hence that it contains the only means of salvation."

To so firm and enviable a faith, Byron replied as follows:—

"You recommend what is very difficult; for how is it possible for one who is acquainted with ecclesiastical history, as well as with the writings of the most renowned theologians, with all the difficult questions which have agitated the minds of the most learned, and who sees the divisions and sects which abound in Christianity, and the bitter language which is often used by the one against the other; how is it possible, I ask, for such a one not to enquire into the nature of the doctrines which have given rise to so much discussion? One Council has pronounced against another; Popes have belied their predecessors, books have been written against other books, and sects have risen to replace other sects; the Pope has opposed the Protestants and the Protestants the Pope. We have heard of Arianism, Socinianism, Methodism, Quakerism, and numberless other sects. Why have these existed? It is a puzzle for the brain; and does it not, after all, seem safer to say 'Let us be neutral; let those fight who will, and when they have settled which is the best religion, then shall we also begin to study it?'"

"I, however, like," he continued, "your way of thinking, in many respects; you make short work of decrees and councils, you reject all which is not in

harmony with the Scriptures, you do not admit of theological works filled with Latin and Greek of both high and low church, you would even suppress many abuses which have crept into the church, and you are right; but I question whether the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Scotch Presbyterians would consider you their ally."

"As for predestination, I do not believe as S—— and M—— do on that subject, but as you do; for it appears to me that I am influenced in a manner which I cannot understand, and am led to do things which my will does not direct. If, as we all admit, there is a supreme Ruler of the universe, and if, as you say, He rules, over both good and bad spirits, then those actions which we perform against our will are likewise under His direction. I have never tried to sift this subject, but satisfied myself by believing that there is, in certain events, a predestination which depends upon the will of God."

The Doctor replied, "that he had founded his belief upon his own grounds."

The Doctor then touched upon the differences which existed in religious opinions, and expressed his regret at this, whilst showing, nevertheless, some indulgence for those Christian sects which do not attack the actual fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But he was intolerant as regards other sects, such as Arianism, Socinianism, and Swedenborgianism, of which he spoke almost with passion.

"You seem to hate the Socinians greatly," remarked Byron, "but is this charitable? Why exclude a Socinian, who believes honestly, from any hope of salvation? Does he not also found his belief

upon the Bible? It is a religion which gains ground daily. Lady Byron is much in favour with its followers. We were wont to discuss religious matters together, and many of our misunderstandings have arisen from that. Yet, on the whole, I think her religion and mine were much alike."

Of course the Doctor deplored the existence of such bold doctrines.

Lord Byron then spoke of Shelley :—

"I wish," he said, "you had known him, and that I might have got you both together. You remind me of him, not only in looks, but by your manner of speaking."

Besides physical appearance, it is easy to understand that there existed a great likeness between the two minds, different though their moral tendencies might have been. In both could be traced that degree of mysticism and expansiveness, which make the poet and the missionary. Byron praised the virtues of Shelley, and styled them Christian, and spoke mainly of his great benevolence of character, and of his generosity above his means.

"Certainly," replied the Doctor, "such rare virtues are esteemed among Christians, but they cannot be called Christian virtues, unless they spring from Christian principles: and in Shelley they were not so. His virtues might deserve human praise, they were no doubt pagan virtues; but they were nothing in the eyes of God, since God has declared that nothing pleases Him but that which springs from a good motive, especially the love of and belief in Christ, which was wanting in Shelley."

When Kennedy had characterised Shelley in even

stronger terms, Byron said to him: "I see it is impossible to move your soul to any sympathy, or even to obtain from you in common justice a little indulgence for an unfortunate young man, gifted with a lofty mind and a fine imagination."

These remarks reveal the tolerant spirit of Lord Byron, but they also show how the best natures are spoiled by dogmatism.

The conversation had lasted several hours. Night was coming on, and the Doctor, carried away by his zeal, had forgotten the hour. His host, however, did nothing to remind him of it, and when Kennedy got up to take his leave, he said to Byron, after making excuses for remaining so long, "God having gifted you, my lord, with a mind which can grasp every subject, I am convinced that if your lordship would devote yourself to the study of religion, you would become one of its lights, the pride of your country, and the consolation of every honest person."

Lord Byron replied:—

"I certainly intend to study the matter, but you must give me a little time. You see that I have begun well: I listen to all you say. Don't you find that my arguments are more like your own than you would have thought?"

"Yes," answered the Doctor, "and it gives me great pleasure. I have far better hopes of your lordship's conversion than of that of the young officers who listened to me without understanding the meaning of my words. You have shown greater patience and candour than I could have imagined you to be capable of; whereas they, on the contrary, exhibited so hardened a spirit that they appeared to look

upon the subject as one which lent itself admirably to ridicule and laughter."

"You must allow," said Byron, "that in the times in which we are now living it is difficult to bestow attention to any serious religious matter. I think, however, I can promise to reflect even more on the subject than I have done hitherto, without, however, promising to adopt your orthodox views."

The Doctor then asked him leave to present him with the work of B——, which he commended in high terms. Lord Byron said he would have great pleasure in reading it, and told the Doctor that he should always be happy to see him, and at any time that he liked to come. "Should I be out when you come," he added, "take my books and read until my return."

On leaving Byron the Doctor reflected over all that had taken place, and feared that his zeal had carried him too far—that his long conversation might have tired rather than interested Byron; but on the whole, he concluded by saying to himself, "it appears to me, that Byron never exhibited the least symptom of fatigue, but, on the contrary, continually showed great attention from beginning to end."

We have, perhaps, dwelt too much in our report of this conversation, but we wished to do so for several reasons. First, because it shows, better than a public debate, the real thoughts and feelings of Byron on religious matters, next the real nature of his religious opinions, and finally we find, in Byron's conversation, virtues such as amiability, goodness, patience, delicacy, and toleration, which have not been sufficiently noticed.

The sympathy which Kennedy had conceived for Byron after the public meeting greatly increased after this first conversation. The candour and simplicity depicted on his handsome countenance, showed that his lofty intelligence could, better than any one else, grasp the theories of the Doctor; and the latter felt that if he could not prevail in making Byron a believer in his own orthodox views, at least he could prepare the way for the acquirement of every virtue, and he resolved, therefore, to profit by the permission given him of often visiting Byron.

Meanwhile, the young officers continued their jokes, and pretended that Byron was laughing at the Doctor, and making use of him in order to study Methodism, which he wished to introduce into his poem of 'Don Juan.' There is, however, a community of feeling between two frank natures, and Byron felt that the Doctor's sincerity commanded respect, while the Doctor, on the other hand, knew that Lord Byron was too earnest to condescend to a mockery of him.

"There was," says Kennedy, "nothing flighty in his manner with me, and nothing which showed any desire to laugh at religion."

When he returned to see Lord Byron, he found him more than ever preoccupied with his approaching departure for Continental Greece, and engrossed with a multitude of various occupations and visits. Byron, nevertheless, received him most graciously, and maintained that jovial humour which was one of his characteristics in conversation. Byron had reflected a good deal since his last interview with the Doctor, but the direction which his thoughts had taken was

not precisely that which the Doctor had advised him to pursue. They did not agree with the tenets of the Doctor's religion. The latter had not advised an unlimited use of one's reason, but, on the contrary, had recommended reliance on the traditional and orthodox teachings of the Church. To reason, however, constituted in Byron a positive necessity. He could not admit that God had given us the power of thought not to make use of it, and obliged us to believe that which in religion, as in other things, appears ridiculous to our reason, and shocks our sense of justice. "It is useless to tell me," he said, somewhere in his memoranda, "that I am to believe and not to reason: you might just as well tell a man, 'Wake not, but sleep.' Then to be threatened with eternal sufferings and torments!—I cannot help thinking that as many devils are created by the threat of eternal punishment, as numberless criminals are made by the severity of the penal laws."

Mysteries and dogmas, however, were not objectionable to Byron. This was shown in his conversation with Kennedy on the subject of the Trinity and of predestination. However little disposed he may have been to believe in mysteries, he, nevertheless, bowed in submission before their existence, and respected the faith which they inspire in minds more happily constituted than his own. His partial scepticism, or rather that in him which has been so denominated, was humble and modest in comparison to Montaigne's scepticism. Byron admitted that these were mysteries because the littleness of man and the greatness of God were ever present to him. He would have agreed with Newton in saying

that "he was like a child playing on the beach with the waves which bathed the sands. The water with which he played was what he knew; what he ignored was the wide-spread ocean before him." Surrounded as we are by mysteries on all sides, he would have esteemed it presumption on his part to reject, in the name of science, all the mysteries of religion, when science itself has only to deal with phenomena. All is necessarily a mystery in its origin, and not to understand was no sufficient reason in the eyes of Byron to deny altogether the existence of matters relating to the Divinity. Could he reject religious dogmas under the pretext of not being able to understand them, when he admitted others equally difficult of comprehension, although supported by logical proofs?

Among the mysteries of religion founded entirely upon revelation, there was one, however, which not only weighed upon his mind, but actually gave him positive pain. This was the dogma of eternal punishment, which he could not reconcile with the idea of an omnipotent Creator, as omnipotence implies perfect goodness and justice, of which the ideal has been implanted in our hearts. Here again his objections sprang from kindness of disposition.

After speaking awhile on the subject of prayer, Byron said to Kennedy:—

"There is a book which I must show you," and, having chosen from a number of books on the table an octavo volume, entitled 'Illustrations of the Moral Government of God, by E. Smith, M.D., London,' he showed it to Kennedy, and asked him whether he knew of it. On Kennedy replying in

the negative, Byron said that the author of the book proved that hell was not a place of eternal punishment.

"This is no new doctrine," replied Kennedy, "and I presume the author to be a Socinian, who, if consistent at all with his opinions, will sooner or later reject the Bible entirely, and avow himself to be what he really is already, namely a Deist. Where did your lordship find the book?"

"It was sent to me from England," replied Byron, "to convert me, I suppose. The author's arguments are very powerful. They are taken from the Bible, and, whilst proving that the day will come when every intellectual being will enjoy the bliss of eternal happiness, he shows how impossible is the doctrine which pretends that sin and misery can exist eternally under the government of a God whose principal attributes are Goodness and Love."

"But," said Kennedy, "how does he then explain the existence of sin in the world for upwards of 6000 years? That is equally inconsistent with the notion of perfect love and goodness as united in God."

"I cannot admit the soundness of your argument," replied Byron; "for God may allow sin and misery to co-exist for a time, but His goodness must prevail in the end, and cause their existence to cease. At any rate it is better to believe that the infinite goodness of God, whilst allowing evil to exist as a means of our arriving at perfection, will show itself still greater some day when every intellectual being shall be purified and freed from the bondage of sin and misery."

As Kennedy persisted in arguing against the

author's opinions, Lord Byron asked him "Why he was so desirous of proving the eternity of hell, since such a doctrine was most decidedly against the gentle and kind character of the teaching of Christ?" To other arguments on the same subject, Byron replied, that he could not determine as to the justice of their conclusions, but that he could not help thinking it would be very desirable to show that in the end all created beings must be happy, and therefore rather agreed with Mr. Smith than with the Doctor.

As Lord Byron, however, had always allowed that man was free in thought and action, and therefore a responsible being made to justify the ends of Providence, he believed that Providence did give some sanction to the laws implanted in our natures. Sinners must be punished, but a merciful God must proportion punishments to the weakness of our natures, and Byron therefore inclined towards the Catholic belief in Purgatory, which agreed better with his own appreciation of the goodness and mercy of God.

Lord Byron's preference for Catholicism is well known. His first successes of oratory in the House of Lords were due to the cause of Catholicism in Ireland, which he defended; and when he wished his little daughter Allegra to be brought up in the Catholic faith, he wrote to Mr. Hoppner, British Consul at Venice, who had always taken a lively interest in the child, to say that:—

"In the convent of Bagna-Cavallo she will at least have her education advanced, and her morals and religion cared for. . . . It is, besides, my wish

that she should be a Roman Catholic, which I look upon as the best religion, as it is assuredly the oldest of the various branches of Christianity."

This predilection for Catholicism was not the result of the poetry of that religion, or of the effect which its pomps and gorgeous ceremonies produced upon the imagination. They, no doubt, were not indifferent to a mind so easily impressed as his, but not sufficient to justify his preference; for Byron, although a poet, never allowed his reason to be swayed by his imagination. He reasoned upon every subject. His objections proceeded as much from his mind as his heart. "Catholicism," he was wont to say, "is the most ancient of worships; and as for our own heresy, it unquestionably had its origin in vice. With regard to those difficulties which baffle our understanding, are they more easily explained by Protestants than by Catholics?

"Catholicism, at least, is a consoling religion, and its belief in Purgatory conciliates the justice of the Almighty with His goodness. Why has Protestantism given up so human a belief? To intercede for and do good to beings whom we have loved here below, is to be not altogether separated from them."

"I often regretted," he said on one occasion at Pisa, "that I was not born a Catholic. Purgatory is a consoling doctrine. I am surprised that the Reformers gave it up, or that they did not at least substitute for it something equally consoling. It is," he remarked to Shelley, "a refinement of the doctrine of transmigration taught by your stupid philosophers."

It was, therefore, chiefly this doctrine, and his abhorrence of Calvin, which attracted Byron towards Catholicism. A comparison was made before him, on one occasion, between Catholicism and Protestantism. "What matters," said Byron, "that Protestantism has decreased the number of its obligations, and reduced its articles of faith? Both religions proceed from the same origin,—authority and examination. It matters little that the measures of either be different; but why does the Protestant deny to the Catholic the privilege, which he claims more than he uses, of free examination? Catholics also claim the right of proving the soundness of their belief, and, therefore, admit likewise the right of discussion and examination. As for authority, if the Catholic obeys the Church and considers it infallible, does not the Protestant do the same with the Bible? And whilst recognising the authority of the Church on the one hand, on the other he claims a right to free examination, does he not incur the liability of being thought inconsistent? And, after all, is not the authority of the Church the better of the two?. There seems to be greater peace for the mind who confides in it, than in the belief in the authority of a book, where one must ever seek the way to salvation by becoming a theologian, as it were. And is it not fairer to have certain books, such, for instance, as the 'Apocalypse,' explained to us by the Church, than to have them expounded by people more or less well informed or prejudiced?"

Such were Byron's views, if not his very words. Before Byron left for Greece, Kennedy had several other conversations with him; but as the limits of

this chapter do not allow of my entering into them, I will merely add that they all prove the great charm of Byron's mind, and the gentleness of his nature in dealing with persons of contrary opinions to his own, but who argued honestly and from conviction. So it came about that, although the most docile of the Doctor's pupils, he refused to change his views concerning eternal punishment. During one of the last of Kennedy's visits to him, he found several young men with Lord Byron, and among these M. S——, and M. F——. The former, seated at one corner of the table, was explaining to Count Gamba certain views which were anything but orthodox. Lord Byron turned to the Doctor, and said:—

"Have you heard what S—— said? I assure you, he has not made one step towards conversion; he is worse than I am."

M. F—— having joined in the conversation, and said that there were many contradictions in the Scriptures, Byron replied:—

"This is saying too much: I am a sufficiently good believer not to discover any contradictions in the Scriptures which cannot, upon reflection, be explained; what most troubles me is eternal punishment: I am not prepared to believe in so terrible a dogma, and this is my only difference with the Doctor's views; but he will not allow that I am an orthodox Christian, unless I agree with him in that matter."

This was said half-seriously, half-jestingly, but in so amiable a manner, and in a tone which was so free from mockery, that even the austere Doctor was

fain to forgive him for entertaining such erroneous views.

When Byron left for Missolonghi, he carried away with him a real regard for Kennedy, notwithstanding their differences of opinion. Kennedy, on the other hand, had conceived for Byron the greatest liking, and, indeed, shows it in his book. His portrait of Lord Byron is so good, that we have thought it right to reproduce it, together with his general impressions in another chapter.

Byron's death plunged Kennedy into the deepest grief; and it was then that he gathered all his conversations which he had had with Lord Byron into one volume, which he published. But his friends, or so-called friends, showed themselves hostile to the publication. Some feared that he would exaggerate either Lord Byron's faith or want of it, and others, less disinterested, apprehended the revelation of some of their own views, which might fail to meet with the approval of the public at home. When, therefore, Kennedy applied to several of these who were at Missolonghi to know in what religious frame of mind Byron died, he met with rebukes of all kinds, and his credit was attacked by articles in newspapers, endeavouring to show that Byron had all along been laughing at the Doctor. All these attacks might have influenced Kennedy's picture of Byron, but it will be seen that, with the exception of a few puritanical touches, the artist's picture is not unworthy of the original.

In the preface to his book, the Doctor, not knowing whether he should make use of the conversation he had had with Byron to give a greater interest to his work, the object of which was to be of use to the

public, answers his own objections in the following words:—

"If my doing so would injure his character or fame, there could not be a moment's hesitation in deciding on the baseness of the measure. But, as far as I can judge, a true statement of what occurred will place his lordship's character in a fairer light than he has himself done in many of his writings, or than can, perhaps, be done by a friendly biographer. The brightest parts of his life were those which he spent in Cephalonia and Missolonghi, and the fact of his wishing to hear Christianity explained by one, simply because he believed him to be sincere, confessing that he derived no happiness from his unsettled notions on religion, expressing a desire to be convinced, and his carrying with him religious books, and promising to give the subject a more attentive study than he had ever done, will throw a certain lustre over the darker side of his fame, . . . and deprive deists of the right of quoting him as a cool, deliberate rejector of Christianity."

To these very significant declarations, coming as they do from so conscientious a believer as Kennedy, I shall add the testimony of a few persons who have been conspicuous by their hostility to Byron. Mr. Galt is one of these, and yet he says:—

"I am persuaded, nevertheless, that to class him among absolute infidels were to do injustice to his memory, and that he has suffered uncharitably in the opinion of the 'rigidly righteous,' who, because he had not attached himself to any particular sect or congregation, assumed that he was an adversary to religion. To claim for him any credit as a pious

man would be absurd; but, to suppose he had not as deep an interest as other men 'in his soul's health and welfare,' was to impute to him a nature which cannot exist."

And elsewhere, after showing, first, what Byron did not believe in; secondly, what he would have liked to believe, but which had not sufficient grounds to satisfy his reason; thirdly, what he did actually believe, Mr. Galt adds:—

"Whatever was the degree of Lord Byron's dubiety as to points of faith and doctrine, he could not be accused of gross ignorance, nor described as animated by any hostile feeling against religion."

The same biographer says elsewhere:—

"That Byron was deeply imbued with the essence of natural piety; that he often felt the power and being of a God thrilling in all his frame, and glowing in his bosom, I declare my thorough persuasion; and that he believed in some of the tenets and in the philosophy of Christianity, as they influence the spirit and conduct of men, I am as little disposed to doubt; especially if those portions of his works which only trench upon the subject, and which bear the impression of fervour and earnestness, may be admitted as evidence. But he was not a member of any particular church."

Medwin, who might be considered to be an authority, before his vanity was wounded by the publication of writings wherein his good faith was questioned, and it was shown that Lord Byron had no great esteem for his talents, says,—

"It is difficult to judge, from the contradictory nature of his writings, what the religious opinions

of Lord Byron were. But on the whole, if he were occasionally sceptical, yet his wavering never amounted to a disbelief in the divine Founder of Christianity. 'I always took great delight,' observed he, 'in the English Cathedral Service. It cannot fail to inspire every man who feels at all, with devotion. Notwithstanding which, Christianity is not the best source of inspiration for a poet. No poet should be tied down to a direct profession of faith. Metaphysic opens a vast field. Nature and heterodoxy present to the poet's imagination fertile sources from which Christianity forbids him to draw; and he exemplified his meaning by a review of the works of Tasso and Milton.

"'Here is a little book somebody has sent me about Christianity,' he said to Shelley and me, 'that has made me very uncomfortable. The reasoning seems to me very strong, the proofs are very staggering. I don't think you can answer it, Shelley; at least, I am sure I can't, and, what is more, I don't wish to do so.'"

Speaking of Gibbon, he says,—"L—— B—— thought the question set at rest in the 'History of the Decline and Fall,' but I am not so easily convinced. It is not a matter of volition to unbelieve. Who likes to own that he has been a fool all his life,—to unlearn all that he has been taught in his youth? Or can think that some of the best men that ever lived have been fools?" And again,—

"You believe in Plato's three principles, why not in the Trinity? One is not more mystical than the other. I don't know why I am considered an enemy to religion, and an unbeliever. I disowned the other

day that I was of Shelley's school in metaphysics, though I admired his poetry."

"Although," says Lord Harrington, "Byron was no Christian, he was a firm believer in the existence of a God. It is, therefore, equally remote from truth to represent him as either an atheist or a Christian. He was, as he has often told me, a confirmed Deist." Further on, the same writer adds:—

"Byron always maintained that he was a sceptic, but he was not so at all. During a ride at Cephalonia, which lasted two or three hours almost without a pause, he began to talk about 'Cain' and his religious opinions, and he condemned all atheists, and maintained the principles of deism." Mr. Finlay, who used to see Lord Byron in Greece, says, in a letter to his friend Lord Harrington:—

"Lord Byron liked exceedingly to converse upon religious topics, but I never once heard him openly profess to be a Deist."

These quotations are sufficiently numerous, and all point to the same conclusion, but I must quote the words of Gamba before I conclude this subject. He was, as it is known, the great friend of Byron, and alas! sacrificed his noble self, at the age of twenty-four, to the cause of Greece. To Kennedy's inquiries respecting Lord Byron's religious tendencies at Missolonghi, P. Gamba replied as follows:—

"My belief is that his religious opinions were not fixed. I mean, that he was not more inclined towards one than towards another of the Christian sects; but that his feelings were thoroughly religious, and that he entertained the highest respect for the doctrines of Christ, which he considered to be the source of

virtue and of goodness. As for the incomprehensible mysteries of religion, his mind floated in doubts which he wished most earnestly to dispel, as they oppressed him, and that is why he never avoided a conversation on the subject, as you are well aware.

"I have often had an opportunity of observing him at times when the soul involuntarily expresses its most sincere convictions; in the midst of dangers, both at sea and on land; in the quiet contemplation of a calm and beautiful night, in the deepest solitude, &c.; and I remarked that his thoughts always were embued with a religious sentiment. The first time I ever had a conversation with him on that subject was at Ravenna, my native place, a little more than four years ago. We were riding together in a pine wood, on a beautiful spring day, and all was conducive to religious meditation. 'How,' said he, 'raising our eyes to heaven, or directing them to the earth, can we doubt of the existence of God? Or how, turning them inwards, can we doubt that there is something within us more noble and more durable than the clay of which we are formed. Those who do not hear, or are unwilling to listen to those feelings, must necessarily be of a vile nature.' I answered him with all those reasons which the superficial philosophy of Helvetius, his disciples and his masters, have taught. He replied with very strong arguments and profound eloquence, and I perceived that obstinate contradiction on this subject, forcing him to reason upon it, gave him pain. This discourse made a deep impression on me.

"Many times, and in various circumstances, I have

heard him confirm the same sentiments, and he always seemed to me to be deeply convinced of their truth. Last year, at Genoa, when we were preparing for our journey to Greece, he used to converse with me alone for two or three hours every evening, seated on the terrace of his palace in Albano, in the fine evenings of spring, whence there opened a magnificent view of that superb city and the adjoining sea. Our conversation turned almost always on Greece, for which we were so soon to depart, or on religious subjects. In various ways I heard him confirm the sentiments which I have already mentioned to you. 'Why, then,' said I to him, 'have you earned for yourself the name of impious, and enemy of all religious belief, from your writings?' He answered, 'They are not understood, and are wrongly interpreted by the malevolent. My object is only to combat hypocrisy, which I abhor in everything, and particularly in religion, and which now unfortunately appears to me to be prevalent, . . . and for this alone do those to whom you allude wish to render me odious, and make me out to be an impious person, and a monster of incredulity.'

"For the Bible he had always a particular respect. It was his custom to have it always on his study table, particularly during these last months; and you well know how familiar it was to him, since he sometimes knew how to correct your inaccurate citations.

"Fletcher may have informed you about his happy state of mind in his last moments. He often repeated subjects from the Testament, and when, in his last moments, he had in vain attempted to make

known his wishes with respect to his daughter, and others most dear to him in life, and when, on account of the wanderings of his mind, he could not succeed in making himself understood, Fletcher answered him, 'Nothing is nearer my heart than to execute your wishes; but, unfortunately, I have scarcely been able to comprehend half of them.' 'Is it possible?' he replied. 'Alas! it is too late. How unfortunate! Not my will, but the will of God be done.' There remained to him only a few intervals of reason and interruptions of delirium, the effect of determination of blood to the head.

"He often expressed to me the contempt which he felt for those called *esprits forts*, (a set of ignorant egotists, incapable of any generous action, and hypocrites themselves), in their affected contempt of every faith.

"He professed a complete toleration, and a particular respect for every sincere conviction. He would have deemed it an unpardonable crime to detach any one persuaded of the truth from his belief, although it might be tinctured with absurdity, because he believed it could lead to no other end than to render him an infidel."

After so many proofs of Byron's religious tendencies, is it not right to ask, What was that scepticism of which so much has been said that it has been almost received as a fact by the world generally? Did he not believe in the necessity of religion? In a God, Creator of all things? In the spirituality, and therefore immortality, of the soul? In our liberty of action, and our moral responsibility? We have seen what others have said on each of these subjects; let

us now see what he said himself upon the subject. But some will object, 'Are you going to judge of his views from his poetry? Can one attach much importance to opinions expressed in verse? Do not poets often say that which they do not think, but which genius inspires them to write? Are such dictates to be considered as their own views?' Such objections may be valid, and we shall so far respect them, therefore, as to dismiss Lord Byron's poetry, and treat only of that which he has written in prose: we will not consider him when under the influence of inspiration and of genius, but when given up entirely to the silent examination of his conscience. What did his thorough good sense tell him about religion in general? The following note, in which he repels the stupid and wicked attacks of Southey, who called him a sceptic, will prove it:—

"One mode of worship yields to another, but there never will be a country without a worship of some sort. Some will instance France; but the Parisians alone, and a fanatical faction of them, maintained for a short time the absurd dogma of theophilanthropy. If the English Church is upset, it will be by the hands of its own sectaries, not by those of sceptics. People are too wise, too well informed, to submit to an impious unbelief. There may exist a few speculators without faith; but they are small in numbers, and their opinions, being without enthusiasm or appeal to the passions, cannot make proselytes unless they are persecuted, that being the only means of augmenting any sects."

"'I am always,' he writes in his memorandum, 'most religious upon a sunshiny day, as if there were

some association, some internal approach to greater light and purity and the kindler of this dark lantern of our existence.

"The night had also a religious influence, and even more so when I viewed the moon and stars through Herschel's telescope, and saw that they were worlds.'"

And what thought Byron of the existence of God? "Supposing even," he says, "that man existed before God, even this higher pre-Adamite supposititious creation must have had an origin and a creator, for a creation is a more natural imagination than a fortuitous concourse of atoms; all things remount to a fountain, though they may flow to an ocean.

"If, according to some speculations, you could prove the world many thousand years older than the Mosaic chronology, or if you could get rid of Adam and Eve, and the apple, and serpent, still what is to be set up in their stead? or how is the difficulty removed? Things must have had a beginning, and what matters it when or how?"

If Byron did not question the existence of God, did he doubt the spirituality and immortality of the soul? Here are some of his answers:—

"What is poetry?" he asked himself in his memorandum, and he replied—"The feeling of a former world and future." And further, in the same memorandum:—

"Of the immortality of the soul, it appears to me that there can be little doubt, if we attend to the action of the mind for a moment: it is in perpetual activity. I used to doubt it, but reflection has taught me better. The stoics Epictetus and Aurelius call

the present state 'a soul which drags a carcass' —a heavy chain, to be sure, but all chains, being material, may be shaken off. How far our future life will be individual, or, rather, how far it will at all resemble our present existence, is another question; but that the mind is eternal, seems as probable as that the body is not so. Of course, I here venture upon the question without recurring to revelation, which, however, is at least as rational a solution of it as any other. A material resurrection seems strange and even absurd, except for purposes of punishment: and all punishment which is to revenge, rather than correct, must be morally wrong: and when the world is at an end, what moral or warning purpose can eternal tortures answer? Human passions have probably disfigured the Divine doctrines here; but the whole thing is inscrutable."

And again :—

"I have often been inclined to materialism in philosophy; but could never bear its introduction into Christianity, which appears to me essentially founded upon the soul. For this reason, Priestley's 'Christian Materialism' always struck me as deadly. Believe the resurrection of the body, if you will, but not without a soul. The deuce is in it, if after having had a soul (as, surely, the mind, or whatever you call it, is) in this world, we must part with it in the next, even for an immortal materiality; and I own my partiality for spirit."

It has already been seen that, in his early youth, he was intimately convinced of the immortality of his soul, by the fact of the existence of his conscience. But it is equally proved that, as his soul became more

perfect, and rose more and more towards all that is great and virtuous, his conviction of the immortality of the soul became still more certain.

The beautiful words which he addressed to Mr. Parry, a few hours before his agony, confirm our assertions:—

"Eternity and space are before me; but on this subject, thank God, I am happy and at ease. The thought of living eternally, of again reviving, is a great pleasure. Christianity is the purest and most liberal religion in the world; but the numerous teachers who are continually worrying mankind with their denunciations and their doctrines, are the greatest enemies of religion. I have read, with more attention than half of them, the Book of Christianity, and I admire the liberal and truly charitable principles which Christ has laid down. There are questions connected with this subject, which none but Almighty God can solve. Time and space, who can conceive? None but God: on Him I rely."

If he neither questioned the existence of God nor the spirituality and immortality of the soul, did he question our liberty of thought, and hence our moral responsibility?

To put such a question, is to misunderstand Byron completely. Who, more than Byron, ever believed in our right of judgment, and proclaimed that right more strenuously than he has, in prose and in verse? Let any one who has read 'Manfred,' say whether a poet ever developed such Christian and philosophical views with greater energy and power.

Did Lord Byron really question, in his poems, the infinite goodness of God, as he has been accused of

doing? Did his doubts and perplexities of mind, caused by the terrible knowledge of the existence of evil, ever go beyond the limits of the doubts which beset the minds of intellectual men, when the light of faith fails to aid them in their philosophical researches after truth?

When he published his drama, 'Cain, a Mystery,' he was attacked by enemies in the most violent manner. They selected the arguments put into the mouth of Lucifer, and their influence upon Cain, to prove that this biblical poem was a blasphemous composition, and that its author was consequently deserving of being outlawed, as having attempted to question the supreme wisdom of God. But most certainly Lucifer speaks in the poem as Lucifer should speak, unless, indeed, the Evil Spirit ought to speak as a theologian, and the first assassin as a meek orthodox Christian? Byron gave them each the language logically most suited to their respective characters, as Milton did, without, however, incurring the accusation of impiety. It was argued that Byron ought, at least, to have introduced some one charged with the defence of the right doctrines. But was not the drama entitled a Mystery, and was not the title to be justified, as it were? Could he have done otherwise, even if he had wished it ever so much? What could Adam, or even God's angel, do better than remain silent in presence of the mental agony of Cain, and only advise his bowing to the incomprehensibility of the mystery? Again, if discussion was fruitful of results with Abel, must it be the same with Cain? Was Lord Byron to turn both these personages into theologians, ready to discuss

any and every metaphysical question, and to explain the origin and effects of evil? Had they done so, it is not very likely they would have succeeded in persuading Cain of the solidity of their argument, or in dispelling the clouds which obscured his mind, and both calm his despair and satisfy so inquisitive a nature, influenced and mastered, as it was, by evil passions. If Lord Byron thought he could explain the existence of evil, he would not have entitled his poem 'a Mystery.' But, above all, Lord Byron did not wish to outstep the limits of reason to prove still more how powerless is reason, alone and unaided, in its endeavours to conciliate contradictory attributes. The drama was called a Mystery, and Byron wished it to remain such.

Were some of his biographers right in asserting that he had adopted Cuvier's system? But Cuvier never denied the existence of the Creator, as Moore seems to believe. On the contrary, he endeavoured to show, even more forcibly, the admirable work of the Creation, in order to bring out still more in relief the perfection of its Creator.

In the end, however, Byron ceased to think the existence of evil to be so great an injustice to the infinite goodness of God, and expressed in his memorandum the opinion "that history and experience show that good and evil are counterbalanced on earth."

"Were I to begin life again," he said, in the same memorandum, "I don't think I would change anything in mine." A proof that, without understanding why or wherefore, he felt our life on earth to be but the beginning of one which is to be continued in another sphere, under the rule of Him whose gentle hand

can be traced in all things created. For the same reason he was reconciled to the injustice of mankind, believing this life to be a trial, and bearing it with noble courage and fortitude. This mental resignation, however, did not prevent his suffering bitterly in a moral sense. All pleasure became a pain to him at the sight of the sufferings of others. He declared, on one occasion, at Cephalonia, that if everybody was to be damned, and he alone to be saved, he would prefer being damned with the rest. This excess of generosity may have appeared eccentric, but can scarcely seem too exaggerated to those who knew him. Certain it is, that to witness the sufferings of others with resignation, appeared to him to be egotism, and to evince a cold-heartedness, which would have been unpardonable in his eyes. Sometimes even the energy of his writings, dictated, as they were, by his great generosity of heart, appeared as the revolt of a noble nature against the miseries of humanity.

In such a frame of mind was he when he wrote 'Cain,' at Ravenna, in the midst of people who were for the most part unjustly proscribed, and in the midst of sufferings which he always tried to alleviate.

Did he deserve the appellation of sceptic, because he despised that vain philosophy which believes it can explain all things, even God's nature itself, by the sole force of reason? or because, whilst respecting the dogmas proclaimed by our reason and our conscience, he preferred to follow the principles of a philosophy that argues with diffidence, and humbly owns its inability to explain all things, and which caused him to exclaim in 'Don Juan'—

"For me, I know nought; nothing I deny,
Admit, reject, contemn: and what know you,
Except, perhaps, that you were born to die?"

But to whom were these lines addressed? To those metaphysicians, of course, whom he would also have denominated "men who know nothing, but who, among the truths which they ignore, ignore their own ignorance most,"—to those arrogant minds who wish to fathom even the ways which God has kept back from us, and who, in seeking to know the wherefore of all things in creation, are forced to give the name of explanation to mere comparisons.

Byron says, in 'Don Juan,'—

"Explain me your explanation."

He addressed himself finally, to all hypocrites and intolerant men; Byron has been called a sceptic, notwithstanding.

That a sincere and orthodox Catholic, who holds that the negation of a dogma constitutes scepticism, should have called Byron a sceptic because he questioned the doctrine of eternal punishment, is not to be wondered at; but what is matter of astonishment is, that the reproach was addressed to him by the writer of 'Faust,' and by the writer of 'Elvire,' and the 'Meditations.' Yet it is so; and if this psychological problem is not yet solved, let others do it,—we cannot.

To sum up, we may declare, from what we have said, that as regards Lord Byron there has been a confusion of words, and that his scepticism has merely been a natural and inevitable situation in which certain minds who, as it were, are the victims of their own contradictory thoughts, are placed, not-

withstanding their wish to believe. Faith, being a part of poetical feeling, could not but form a part likewise of Byron's nature, but there existed also in him a great tendency to weigh the merits of the opinions of others, and consequently the desire not to arrive too hastily at conclusions.

This combination of instinctive faith and a philosophical mind could not produce in him the belief in those things which did not appear to him to have been first submitted to the test of argument, and proved to be just by the convictions resulting from the test of reasoning to which they had been subjected. It produced, on the contrary, a species of expectant doubt, a state of mind awaiting some decisive explanation, to reject error and embrace the truth. His scepticism, therefore, may be said to have been the result of thought, not of passion.

In religion, however, it must be allowed that his scepticism never went so far as to cause him to deny its fundamental doctrines. These he proclaimed from heartfelt convictions, and his modest, humble, and manly scepticism may be said to have been that of great minds, and his failings, also, theirs. Is a day said to be stormy because a few clouds have obscured the rays of the sun?

Is it necessary to say anything about what he doubted? In showing what he believed, the exception will be found unnecessary. He believed in a Creator, in a spiritual and consequently immortal soul, but which God can reduce to nothing as He created it out of nothing. He believed in liberty of thought, in our responsibility, our privileges, our duties, and especially in the obligation of practising

the great precept which constitutes Christianity; namely, that of charity and devotion towards our neighbour, even to the sacrifice of our existence for his sake. He believed in every virtue, but his experience forbade his according faith to appearances, and trusting in fine phrases. He often found it wise and prudent to scrutinize the idol he was called upon to worship, but when once that idol had borne the test of scrutiny no worship was so sincere.

"Was he orthodox?" will again be asked. To such a question it may be justly answered, that if he did not entertain for all the doctrines revealed by the Scriptures that faith which he was called upon to possess, it was not for want of desiring so powerful an auxiliary to his reason. He felt that, however strong reason might be, it always retains a little wavering and anxious character; and, though essentially religious at heart, he could not master that blind faith required in matters which baffle the efforts of reason to prove their truth logically and definitively. This is to be accounted for by the conflict of his conscience and his philosophical turn of mind. Conviction, for him, was a difficult thing to attain. Hence for him the difficulty of saying "I believe," and hence the accusation of scepticism to which he became liable. He wanted proofs of a decisive character, and his doubts belonged to that school which made Bacon confess that a philosopher who can doubt, knows more than all the wise men together. Byron would never have contested absolutely the truth of any mystery, but have merely stated that, as long as the testimonies of its truth were hidden in obscurity, such a mystery must be liable

to be questioned. He was wont to add, however, that the mysteries of religion did not appear to him less comprehensible than those of science and of reason.

As for miracles, how could he think them absurd and impossible, since he admitted the omnipotence of God? His mind was far too just not to understand that miracles surround us, even from the first origin of our race. He often asked himself, whether the first man could ever have been created a child? "Reason," says a great Christian philosopher, "does not require the aid of the book of Genesis to believe in that miracle."

One evening at Pisa, in the drawing-room of the Countess G——, where Byron was wont to spend all his evenings, a great discussion arose respecting a certain miracle which was said to have taken place at Lucca.

The miracle had been accompanied by several rather ludicrous circumstances and of course laughter was not spared. Shelley, who never lost sight of his philosophy, treated miracles as deplorable superstitions. Lord Byron laughed at the absurdity of the history told, without any malice however. Madame G—— alone did not laugh. "Do you, then, believe in that miracle?" asked Byron. "I do not say I exactly believe in that miracle," she replied; "but I believe in miracles, since I believe in God and in His omnipotence; nor could I believe that God can be deprived of His liberty, when I feel that I have mine. Were I no longer to believe in miracles, it seems to me I should no longer believe in God, and that I should lose my faith."

Lord Byron stopped joking, and said—

"Well, after all, the philosophy of common sense is the truest and the best."

The conversation continued, in the jesting tone in which it had begun, and M. M——, an *esprit fort*, went so far as to condemn the supernatural in the name of the general and permanent laws which govern nature, and to look upon miracles as the legends of a by-gone age, and as errors which affect the ignorant. From what had gone before, he probably fancied that Byron was going to join issue with him. But there was often a wide gulf between the intimate thoughts of Byron and his expressions of them.

"We allow ourselves too often," he said, "to give way to a jocular mood, and to laugh at every thing, probably because God has granted us this faculty to compensate for the difficulty which we find in believing, in the same manner as playthings are given to children. But I really do not see why God should be obliged to preserve in the universe the same order which He once established. To whom did He promise that He would never change it, either wholly or in part? Who knows whether some day He will not give the moon an oval or a square shape instead of a round one?"

This he said smiling, but added immediately after, in a serious tone:—

"Those who believe in a God, Creator of the universe, cannot refuse their belief in the possibility of miracles, for they behold in God the first of all miracles."

Finally, Lord Byron determined himself the limits of what he deemed his necessary belief; and remained throughout life a stanch supporter of those opinions,

but he never ceased to evince a tendency to steer clear of intolerance, which according to him only brought one back to total unbelief.

Let us not omit to add that, as he grew older, he saw better the arrogant weakness of those who screen themselves under the cover of science, and recognized more clearly each day the hand of the Creator in the works of nature.

"Did Lord Byron pray?" is another objection which will be made.

We have already seen what he thought of prayer; we have shown that his poems often took the form of a prayer, and we have read with admiration various passages containing some most sublime lines which completely answer those who accused him of want of religion, while they exhibit the expansion of his soul towards God.

We also know with what feelings of respect he approached places devoted to a religious life, and what charms he found in the ceremonies of the Church. All this is proof enough, it would seem; but, in any case, we must add that if his prayers were not those advised by Kennedy, they were at least the prayers of a great soul which soars upwards to bow before its Creator. "Outward ceremonies," says Fénélon, "are only tokens of that essential point, the religion of the soul, and Byron's prayer was rather a thanksgiving than a request." —"In the eyes of God," says some one, "a good action is worth more than a prayer."

Such was his mode of communing with God even in his early youth, but especially in his last moments, which were so sublime. Can one doubt, that at that

solemn moment his greatest desire was to be allowed to live? He had still to reap all the fruits of his sacrifices. His harvest was only just beginning to ripen. By dint of heroism, he was at last becoming known. He was young, scarcely thirty-six years of age, handsome, rich. Rank and genius were his. He was beloved by many, notwithstanding a host of jealous rivals; and yet, on the point of losing all these advantages, what was his prayer? Was it egotistical or presumptuous? was it to solicit a miracle in his favour? No, his last words were those of noble resignation. "Let Thy holy will, my God, be done, and not mine!" and then absorbed, as it were, in the infinity of God's goodness, and, confiding entirely in God's mercy, he begged that he might be left alone to sleep quietly and peacefully into eternity. On the very day which brought to us the hope of our immortality, he would awake in the bosom of God.

CHAPTER V.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF LORD BYRON.

ALL Byron's biographers (at least all those who knew him) have borne testimony to his great goodness, but they have not dwelt sufficiently upon this principal feature in his character. Biographers generally wish to produce an effect. But goodness is not a sufficiently noticeable quality to be dilated upon; it would not repay ambition or curiosity. It is a quality mostly attributed to the saints, and a biographer prefers dilating upon the defects of his hero, upon some adventure or scandal—means by which it is easy, with a spark of cleverness, to make a monster of a saint: for, alas! the most rooted convictions are often sacrificed for the sake of amusing a reader who is difficult to please, and of satisfying an editor.

Lord Byron's goodness, however, was so exceptional, and contrasted so strongly with the qualities attributed to him by those who only knew him by repute, that, in making an exception of him, astonishment, at the very least, might have been the result. If we look at him conscientiously in every act of his life, in his letters, and in his poetry, we must sympathise particularly with him. We find that his goodness shines as prominently as does his genius, and we feel that it can bear any test at any epoch of, alas! his too short existence. As, however, I do not purpose here to write his biography, I shall confine

myself merely to a few instances, and will give only a few proofs taken from his early life. To no one can the words of Alfieri be better applied than to Byron:—"He is the continuation of the child"—an idea which has been expressed even more elegantly of late by Disraeli, in his 'Literary Characters:'—

"As the sun is seen best at its rising and its setting, so men's native dispositions are clearly perceived whilst they are children, and when they are dying."

LORD BYRON'S CHILDHOOD.

Of those who have written Byron's life, the best disposed among them have not sufficiently noticed his admirable perfection of character when a child, as revealed to us by sundry anecdotes and by his own poems, entitled 'Hours of Idleness:'—

"There was in his disposition," says Moore, "as appears from the concurrent testimony of nurses, tutors, and all who were employed about him, a mixture of affectionate sweetness and playfulness, by which it was impossible not to be attached, and which rendered him then, as in his riper years, easily manageable by those who loved and understood him sufficiently to be at once gentle and firm enough for the task. The female attendant whom he had taken the most fancy to was the youngest of two sisters, named Mary Gray, and she had succeeded in gaining an influence over his mind against which he very rarely rebelled."

By an accident which occurred at the time of his birth one of his feet was twisted out of its natural position, and, to restore the limb to shape, expedients were used under the direction of the celebrated Dr.

Hunter. Mary Gray, to whom fell the task of putting on the bandages at bed-time, used to sing him to sleep, or tell him Scotch ballads and legends, in which he delighted, or teach him psalms, and thus lighten his pain. Mary Gray was a very pious woman, and she unquestionably inspired Byron with that love of the Scriptures which he preserved to his last day. She only parted from Byron when he was placed at school at Dulwich, in 1800. The child loved her as she loved him. He gave her his watch, and, later, sent her his portrait. Both these treasures were given to Dr. Ewing (an enthusiast of Byron, who had collected the dying words of Mary Gray, which were all for the child she had nursed), by her grateful husband.

The same gratitude was shown by Byron to Mary Gray's sister, who had been his first nursery governess. He wrote to her after he had left Scotland, to ask news of her, and to announce with delight that he could now put on an ordinary shoe—an event, he said, which he had greatly looked forward to, and which he was sure it would give her pleasure to hear.

Before going to school at Aberdeen, Byron had two tutors, Ross and Paterson, both young, intelligent, and amiable ecclesiastics, for whom he always entertained a pleasing and affectionate remembrance.

At seven years of age he went to the Aberdeen Grammar School, and the general impression which he left there, as evinced by the testimony of several of his colleagues who are still living, was, says Moore, "that he was quick, courageous, passionate, to a remarkable degree venturous and fearless, but affectionate and companionable.

"He was most anxious to distinguish himself among his schoolfellows by prowess in all sports and exercises, but, though quick when he could be persuaded to attend, he was in general very low in his class, nor seemed ambitious of being promoted higher."

The anecdotes told of him at this time all prove his fine nature, and show the goodness and greatness of soul which characterised him up to his last day.

All the qualities which are to shine in the man will be found already marked in the child. On one occasion he was taken to see a piece at the Edinburgh theatre, in which one of the actors pretends that the moon is the sun. The child, notwithstanding his timidity, was shocked by this insult to his understanding, rose from his seat, and cried out, "I assure you, my dear sir, that it is the moon." Here, again, we can trace that love of truth which in after life made him so courageous in its proclamation at any cost.

When, at Aberdeen, he was, on one occasion, styled Dominus Byron in the school-room, by way of announcing to him his accession to the title, the child began to cry. Cannot these tears be explained by the mixture of pleasure and pain which he must have felt at that moment—pleasure at becoming a peer, and distress at not being able to share this pleasure with his comrades? Are they not a prelude of the sacrifice of himself which he afterwards made by actually placing himself in the wrong, in order that at the time of his greatest triumph his rivals might not be too jealous of him?

On one occasion, as he was riding with a friend,

they arrived at the bridge of Balgounie, on the river Dee, and, remembering suddenly the old ballad which threatens with death the man who passes the bridge first on a pony, Byron stopped his comrade, and requested to be allowed to pass first; because if the ballad said true, and that one of them must die, it was better, said he, that it should be him, rather than his friend, because he had only a mother to mourn his loss, whereas his friend had a father and a mother, and the pain of his death would fall upon two persons instead of upon one. Another illustration of that heroic generosity of character of which Byron's life offers so many instances.

On another occasion he saw a poor woman coming out of a bookseller's shop, distressed and mortified at not having enough to buy herself the Bible she wanted. The child ran after her, brought her back, made her a present of the desired book, and, in doing so, obeyed that same craving of the heart to do good which placed him all his life at the service of others. These instances will suffice at present.

On his accession to the title, as heir to his great uncle, he left Scotland, and was taken to see Newstead Abbey, his future residence. He spent the winter at Nottingham, the most important of the towns round Newstead. His mother, who was blindly fond of him, could not bear to see any physical defect in him, however slight. She confided him to a quack doctor named Lavender, who promised to cure him, while his studies were continued under the direction of a Mr. Rogers. The treatment which he had to undergo being both painful and tedious, furnishes us with the opportunity of

admiring his strength of mind. Mr. Rogers, who had conceived a great liking for the child, noticed on one occasion that he was suffering. "Pray do not notice it," said Byron, "you will see that I shall behave in such a way that you will not perceive it." Notwithstanding his own want of skill, Mr. Lavender might, perhaps, have cured the child. But Byron, who had no faith in him, always found fault with everything he did, and played tricks upon him.

At last his mother agreed with Lord Carlisle, who was his guardian, to take him to London, to be better educated and taken care of. He was sent to Mr. Glennie's school at Dulwich, and his foot was to be attended to by the famous Dr. Baillie. For the first time, then, did Byron leave the home where he had been rather spoiled than neglected.

Dr. Glennie at once took a great fancy to him, made him sleep in his own study, and watched with an equal care the progress of his studies and the cure of his foot. This latter task was no easy one, owing to the restlessness of the child, who would join in all the gymnastic exercises suitable to his age, whereas absolute repose was prescribed for him. Dr. Glennie says, however, that, once back in the study-room, Byron's docility was equal to his vivacity. He had been instructed according to the mode of teaching adopted at Aberdeen, and had to retrace his steps, owing to the difference of teaching prescribed in English schools.

"I found him enter upon his tasks," says Dr. Glennie, "with alacrity and success. He was playful, good-humoured, and beloved by his companions.

His reading in history and poetry was far beyond the usual standard of his age, and in my study he found, among other works, a set of our poets—from Chaucer to Churchill—which, I am almost tempted to say, he had more than once perused from beginning to end. He showed at this age an intimate acquaintance with the historical parts of the Holy Scriptures, upon which he seemed delighted to converse with me, and reasoned upon the facts contained in the sacred volume with every appearance of belief in the divine truths which they unfold. That the impressions thus imbibed in his boyhood had, notwithstanding the irregularities of his after life, sunk deep into his mind, will appear, I think, to every impartial reader of his works, and I never have been able to divest myself of the persuasion, that he must have found it difficult to violate the better principles early instilled into him."

He remained two years with Dr. Glennie, during which time he does not appear to have made great progress in his studies, owing to the too frequent amusements procured for him by his over-fond mother. But though Mr. and Mrs. Glennie saw the child very seldom after he left them, they always remained much attached to him, and followed his career with much interest, owing to the fine qualities which they had loved and admired in him as a child.

At thirteen years old he went to Harrow, the head master of which school was Dr. Drury, who at once conceived a great fancy for the boy, and remained attached to him all his life. He thus expresses himself with regard to Byron:—

"A degree of shyness hung about him for some time. His manner and temper soon convinced me that he might be led by a silken string, rather than by a cable. On that principle I acted."

To Lord Carlisle's inquiries about Byron, Drury replied:—"He has talents, my Lord, which will add lustre to his rank."

After having been his master he remained his friend, and, shortly before his death, Byron declared that, of all the masters and friends he ever had, the best was Dr. Drury, for whom he should entertain as much regard as he would have done for his own father.

Now that we have passed in review both his tutors and his servants; that we have seen them all, without exception, beloved by the child as they loved him, we must take a glance at his college life, and see how he came to possess such charms of manner and of character. In the youth will appear those great qualities which began in the child, and will shine in the man. On one occasion he prevented his comrades from setting fire to the school, by appealing to their filial love, and pointing to the names of their parents on the walls which they wished to destroy. He thus saved the school.

"When Lord Byron and Mr. Peel were at Harrow together," says Moore, "a tyrant some few years older, whose name was N——, claimed a right to fag little Peel, which claim Peel resisted. His resistance was vain, and N—— not only subdued him, but determined also to punish the refractory slave, by inflicting a bastinado on the inner fleshy side of the boy's right arm. While the stripes were succeeding each other,

and poor Peel was writhing under them, Byron saw and felt for the misery of his friend; and, although he knew he was not strong enough to fight N—— with any hope of success, and that it was dangerous even to approach him, he advanced to the scene of action, and, with a flush of rage, tears in his eyes, and a voice trembling between terror and indignation, asked very humbly if N—— would be pleased to tell him how many stripes he meant to inflict? 'Why,' returned the executioner, 'you little rascal, what is that to you?' 'Because, if you please,' said Byron, holding out his arm, 'I would take half.' There is a mixture of simplicity and magnanimity in this little trait which is truly heroic."

At fifteen Byron was still at Harrow. A certain Mr. Peel ordered his fag, Lord Gort, to make him some toast for tea. The little fag did not do it well, and as a punishment had a red-hot iron applied to the palm of his hand. The child cried, and the masters requested that he should name the author of such cruelty. He did not, however, as the expulsion of Peel might have resulted from the avowal.

Byron, highly pleased with this courageous act, went up to Lord Gort and said, "You are a brave fellow, and, if you like it, I shall take you as my fag, and you will not have to suffer any more ill-treatment."

"I became his fag," says Lord Gort, "and was very fortunate in obtaining so good a master, and one who constantly gave me presents as he did.

"When he gave dinners he always recommended his fag to partake of all the delicacies which he had ordered for his guests."

At all times Byron's greatest pleasure was to make people happy, and his conduct to his fags showed the kind heart with which through life he acted towards his subordinates.

His favourite fag at Harrow was the Duke of Dorset. How much he loved him can be seen in the beautiful lines which he addressed to the Duke on leaving Harrow, and which reveal his noble heart:—

TO THE DUKE OF DORSET.

Dorset! whose early steps with mine have stray'd,
Exploring every path of Ida's glade;
Whom still affection taught me to defend,
And made me less a tyrant than a friend,
Though the harsh custom of our youthful band
Bade *thee* obey, and gave *me* to command;
Thee, on whose head a few short years will shower
The gift of riches and the pride of power;
E'en now a name illustrious is thine own,
Renown'd in rank, nor far beneath the throne.
Yet, Dorset, let not this seduce thy soul
To shun fair science, or evade control.
Though passive tutors, fearful to dispraise
The titled child, whose future breath may raise,
View ducal errors with indulgent eyes,
And wink at faults they tremble to chastise.

When youthful parasites, who bend the knee
To wealth, their golden idol, not to thee—
And even in simple boyhood's opening dawn
Some slaves are found to flatter and to fawn—
When these declare, "that pomp alone should wait
On one by birth predestined to be great;
That books were only meant for drudging fools,
That gallant spirits scorn the common rules;"
Believe them not;—they point the path to shame,
And seek to blast the honours of thy name.
Turn to the few in Ida's early throng,
Whose souls disdain not to condemn the wrong;
Or if, amidst the comrades of thy youth,
None dare to raise the sterner voice of truth,
Ask thine own heart; 'twill bid thee, boy, forbear;
For *well* I know that virtue lingers there.

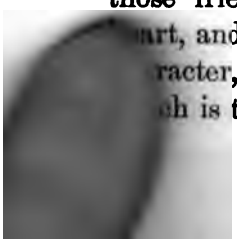
Yes! I have mark'd thee many a passing day,
But now new scenes invite me far away;
Yes! I have mark'd within that generous mind
A soul, if well matured, to bless mankind.
Ah! though myself by nature haughty, wild,
Whom Indiscretion hail'd her favourite child;
Though every error stamps me for her own,
And dooms my fall, I fain would fall alone;
Though my proud heart no precept now can tame,
I love the virtues which I cannot claim.

'T is not enough, with other sons of power,
To gleam the lambent meteor of an hour;
To swell some peerage page in feeble pride,
With long-drawn names that grace no page beside;
Then share with titled crowds the common lot—
In life just gazed at, in the grave forgot;
While nought divides thee from the vulgar dead,
Except the dull cold stone that hides thy head,
The mouldering 'scutcheon, or the herald's roll,
That well-emblazon'd but neglected scroll,
Where lords, unhonour'd, in the tomb may find
One spot, to leave a worthless name behind.
There sleep, unnoticed as the gloomy vaults
That veil their dust, their follies, and their faults,
A race, with old armorial lists o'erspread,
In records destined never to be read.
Fain would I view thee, with prophetic eyes,
Exalted more among the good and wise,
A glorious and a long career pursue,
As first in rank, the first in talent too:
Spurn every vice, each little meanness shun;
Not Fortune's minion, but her noblest son.

Turn to the annals of a former day;
Bright are the deeds thine earlier sires display.
One, though a courtier, lived a man of worth,
And call'd, proud boast! the British drama forth.
Another view, not less renown'd for wit;
Alike for courts, and camps, or senates fit;
Bold in the field, and favour'd by the Nine;
In every splendid part ordain'd to shine;
Far, far distinguish'd from the glittering throng,
The pride of princes, and the boast of song.
Such were thy fathers, thus preserve their name;

Not heir to titles only, but to fame.
The hour draws nigh, a few brief days will close,
To me, this little scene of joys and woes;
Each knell of Time now warns me to resign
Shades where Hope, Peace, and Friendship all were mine:
Hope, that could vary like the rainbow's hue,
And gild their pinions as the moments flew;
Peace, that reflection never frown'd away,
By dreams of ill to cloud some future day;
Friendship, whose truth let childhood only tell;
Alas! they love not long, who love so well.
To these adieu! nor let me linger o'er
Scenes hail'd, as exiles hail their native shore,
Receding slowly through the dark-blue deep,
Beheld by eyes that mourn, yet cannot weep.
Dorset, farewell! I will not ask one part
Of sad remembrance in so young a heart;
The coming morrow from thy youthful mind
Will sweep my name, nor leave a trace behind.
And yet, perhaps, in some maturer year,
Since chance has thrown us in the self-same sphere,
Since the same senate, nay, the same debate,
May one day claim our suffrage for the state,
We hence may meet, and pass each other by,
With faint regard, or cold and distant eye.

For me, in future, neither friend nor foe,
A stranger to thyself, thy weal or woe,
With thee no more again I hope to trace
The recollection of our early race;
No more, as once, in social hours rejoice,
Or hear, unless in crowds, thy well-known voice:
Still, if the wishes of a heart untaught
To veil those feelings which perchance it ought,
If these—but let me cease the lengthen'd strain,—
Oh! if these wishes are not breathed in vain,
The guardian seraph who directs thy fate
Will leave thee glorious, as he found thee great.

It was especially at Harrow that Byron contracted those friendships which were like cravings of his  art, and which, although partaking of a passionate racter, had nevertheless none of the instability ch is the characteristic of passion.

The death of some of his friends, and the coldness of others, caused him the greatest grief, and broke up the illusions of youth, exchanging them for that misanthropy discernible in some of his poems, though contrary to his real character.

For those, on the other hand, who were spared, and remained faithful to him, Byron preserved through life the warmest affection and the tenderest regard; the principal feature of his nature being the unchanging character of his sentiments.

Although he showed at an early age his disposition to a poetical turn of mind, by the force of his feelings and by his meditative wanderings,—in Scotland among the mountains and on the sea-shore at Cheltenham; —by his rapturous admiration of the setting sun, as well as by the delight which he took in the legends told him by his nurses, and the emotions which he experienced to a degree which made him lose all appetite, all rest, and all peace of mind; yet no one would have believed at that time that a gigantic poetical genius lay dormant in so active a nature. Soon, however, did his soul light up his intelligence, and obliged him to have recourse to his pen to pour out his feelings. From that moment his genius spread its roots in his heart, and Harrow became his paradise owing to the affection which he met with there.

It was at Harrow that he wrote, between his fourteenth and eighteenth year, the 'Hours of Idleness, by a Minor,' of which he had printed at the request of his friends, a few copies for private circulation only. These modest poems did not, however,

escape the brutal attacks of critics. Mackenzie, however, a man of talent himself, soon discovered that at the bottom of these poems there lay the roots of a great poetical genius. The 'Hours of Idleness' are a treasure of intellectual and psychological gleanings. They show man as God created him, and before his noble soul, depressed by the insolence of his enemies and the troubles of life, endeavoured to escape the eyes of the world, or at least of those who could not or would not understand him.

The noblest instincts of human nature shine so conspicuously in the pages of this little volume, that we thank God that he created such a noble mind, whilst we feel indignant towards those who could not appreciate it. But to understand him better he must reveal himself, and we shall therefore quote a few of his own sayings as a boy. His first grief brought forth his first poem. A young cousin of his died, and of her death he spoke to this effect in his memorandum :—

"My first recourse to poetry was due to my passion for my cousin Margaret Parker. She was, without doubt, one of the most beautiful and ethereal beings I ever knew. I have forgotten the lines, but never shall I forget her. I was twelve years of age, and she was older than myself by nearly a year. I loved her so passionately, that I could neither sleep, nor get rest, or eat when thinking of her. She died of consumption, and it was at Harrow that I heard both of her illness and of her death."

Then it was that Byron wrote his first elegy, which he characterises as "very dull;" but it is interesting as his first poetical essay, and as the first cry of pain uttered by a child who vents his grief in verse, and reveals in it the goodness of his heart and the power of his great mind. On a calm and dark night he goes to her tomb and strews it with flowers; then, speaking of her virtues, exclaims:—

"But wherefore weep? Her matchless spirit soars
Beyond where splendid shines the orb of day;
And weeping angels lead her to those bowers
Where endless pleasures virtue's deeds repay.

And shall presumptuous mortals Heaven arraign,
And, madly, godlike Providence accuse?
Ah! no, far fly from me attempts so vain;—
I'll ne'er submission to my God refuse.

Yet is remembrance of those virtues dear,
Yet fresh the memory of that beauteous face;
Still they call forth my warm affection's tear,
Still in my heart retain their wonted place."—1802.

So beautiful a mind, and one so little understood, reveals itself more and more in each poem of this first collection; and on this account, rather than because of its poetical merits, are the 'Hours of Idleness' interesting to the psychological biographer of Byron. "Whoever," says Sainte-Beuve, "has not watched a youthful talent at its outset, will never form for himself a perfect and really true appreciation of it."

Moore adds: "It is but justice to remark that the early verses of Lord Byron give but little promise of those dazzling miracles of poesy with which he afterwards astonished and enchanted the world, however distinguished they are by tenderness and grace.

"There is, indeed, one point of view in which these

productions are deeply and intrinsically interesting; as faithful reflections of his character at that period of life, they enable us to judge of what he was before any influences were brought to bear upon him, and so in them we find him pictured exactly such as each anecdote of his boyish days exhibits him—proud, daring, and passionate—resentful of slight or injustice, but still more so in the cause of others than in his own; and yet, with all this vehemence, docile and placable at the least touch of a hand authorized by love to guide him. The affectionateness, indeed, of his disposition, traceable as it is through every page of this volume, is yet but faintly done justice to even by himself; his whole youth being from earliest childhood a series of the most passionate attachments, of those overflowings of the soul, both in friendship and love, which are still more rarely responded to than felt, and which, when checked or sent back upon the heart, are sure to turn into bitterness."

Whilst his soul expanded with the first rays of love which dawned upon it, friendship too began to assert its influence over him. But in continuing to observe in him the effects of incipient love, let us remark that, while such precocious impressions are only with others the natural development of physical instincts they were, in Byron, also, the expression of a soul that expands, of an amiability, of a tenderness ever on the increase. Though sensible to physical beauty as he always was through life, his principal attraction, however, was in that beauty which expresses the beauty of the soul, without which condition no physical perfection commanded his attention. We have seen what an ethereal creature Miss Margaret

Parker was. Miss Chaworth succeeded her in Byron's affections, and was his second, if not third love if we notice his youthful passion at nine years of age for Mary Duff. But his third love was the occasion of great pain to him. Miss Chaworth was heiress to the grounds and property of Annesley, which were in the immediate neighbourhood of Newstead. Notwithstanding, however, the enmity which had existed between the two families for a long time, on account of a duel which had resulted in the death of Miss Chaworth's grandfather, Byron was received most cordially at Annesley. Mrs. Chaworth thought that a marriage between her daughter and Byron might perhaps some day efface the memory of the feud that had existed between their respective families. Byron therefore found his schoolboy advances encouraged by both mother and daughter, and his imagination naturally was kindled. The result was that Byron fell desperately in love with Miss Chaworth; but he was only fifteen years old, and yet an awkward schoolboy, with none of that splendid and attractive beauty for which he was afterwards distinguished. Miss Chaworth was three years older, and unfortunately her heart was already engaged to the man who, to her misfortune, she married the year after. She therefore looked upon Byron as a mere child, as a younger brother, and his love almost amused her. She, however, not only gave him a ring, her portrait, and some of her hair, but actually carried on a secret correspondence with him. These were the faults for which she afterwards had to suffer so bitterly. Such an union, however, with so great a difference of age, would not have been natural. It

could only be a dream; but I shall speak elsewhere * of the nature of this attachment, which had its effect upon Byron, in order to show the beauty of his soul under another aspect. I can only add here that he had attributed every virtue to this girl whom he afterwards styled frivolous and deceitful.

On his return to Harrow this love and his passionate friendships divided his heart. But when the following vacation came, his dream vanished. Miss Chaworth was engaged to another, and on his return to Harrow he vainly tried to forget her who had deceived and wounded him. Like other young men, he devoted his time during the Harrow or Cambridge vacations to paying his respects and offering his regards to numerous belles, whose names appear variously in his poems as Emma, Caroline, Helen, and Mary. Moore believes them to have been imaginary loves. A slight acquaintance with the liberty enjoyed by young men at English universities would lead one to believe these loves to have been anything but unreal. This can be the more readily believed, as Byron always sought in reality the objects which he afterwards idealized. He always required some earthly support, though the slightest, as Moore observes, in speaking of the charming lines with which his love for Miss Chaworth inspired him, at the time when the recollection of it made him compare his misfortune in marrying Miss Milbank, with the happier lot which might have been his had he married Miss Chaworth. Whether these loves were real or not, however, it must be borne in mind that Byron deemed all physical beauty

* See chapter upon Generosity.

to be nothing if unaccompanied by moral beauty. Thus, in speaking of a vain young girl, he exclaims—

"One who is thus from nature vain,
I pity, but I cannot love."

And to Miss N. N——, who was exquisitely beautiful, but in whose eyes earthly passion shone too powerfully, he says :—

"Oh, did those eyes, instead of fire,
With bright but mild affection shine,
Though they might kindle less desire,
Love, more than mortal, would be thine.
For thou art form'd so heavenly fair,
Howe'er those orbs may wildly beam,
We must admire, but still despair;
That fatal glance forbids esteem."

In a letter to Miss Pigot, which he wrote from Cambridge, he says :—

"Saw a girl at St. Mary's the image of Ann ——; thought it was her—all in the wrong—the lady stared, so did I—I blushed, so did *not* the lady—sad thing—wish women had more modesty."

On awaking from his dream, and on finding that the jewels with which he had believed Mary's nature to be adorned were of his own creation, he sought his consolation in friendship. His heart, which was essentially a loving one, could not be consoled except by love, and Harrow, to use his own expressions, became a paradise to him. In tracing the picture of Tasso's infancy he has drawn a picture of himself :—

"From my very birth
My soul was drunk with love, which did pervade
And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth:
Of objects all inanimate I made
Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers,
And rocks, whereby they grew, a paradise,
Where I did lay me down within the shade
Of waving trees, and dreamed uncounted hours,
Though I was chid for wandering." . . . .

This sentiment of friendship, which is always more powerful in England than on the Continent, owing to the system of education which takes children away from their parents at an early age, was keenly developed in Byron, whose affectionate disposition wanted something to make up for the privation of a father's and a brother's love. In his pure and passionate heart friendship and love became mixed: his love partook of the purity of friendship, and his friendships of all the ardour of love.

But to return to his fourteenth year. Whilst expressing in verse his love for his cousin, he expressed at the same time in poetry the strong friendship he had conceived, even before going to Harrow, for a boy who had been his companion.

This boy, who had a most amiable, good, and virtuous disposition, was the son of one of his tenants at Newstead. Aristocratic prejudices ran high in England, and this friendship of Byron for a commoner was sure to call forth the raillery of some of his companions. Notwithstanding this, Byron, at twelve years and a half old, replied in these terms to the mockery of others:—

To E——.

Let Folly smile to view the names
  Of thee and me in friendship twined;
Yet Virtue will have greater claims
  To love, than rank with vice combined.

And though unequal is thy fate,
  Since title deck'd my higher birth!
Yet envy not this gaudy state;
  Thine is the pride of modest worth.

Our souls at least congenial meet,
  Nor can thy lot my rank disgrace;
Our intercourse is not less sweet,
  Since worth of rank supplies the place.

What noble views in a child of twelve! How well one feels that, whatever may be his fate, such a nature will never lose its independence, nor allow prejudice to carry it beyond the limits of honour and of justice, and that its device will always be, "*Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra.*" "I do what I ought, come what may."

At thirteen he wrote some lines in which he seemed to have a kind of presentiment of the glory that awaited him, and, at any rate, in which he displayed his resolve to deserve it:—

A FRAGMENT.

When, to their airy hall, my fathers' voice
Shall call my spirit, joyful in their choice;
When, poised upon the gale, my form shall ride,
Or, dark in mist, descend the mountain's side;
Oh! may my shade behold no sculptured urns
To mark the spot where earth to earth returns!
No lengthen'd scroll, no praise-encumber'd stone;
My epitaph shall be my name alone:
If *that* with honour fail to crown my clay,
Oh! may no other fame my deeds repay!
That, only *that*, shall single out the spot;
By that remember'd, or with that forgot.

Again, at thirteen, a visit to Newstead inspired him with the following beautiful lines:—

ON LEAVING NEWSTEAD ABBEY.

"Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days? Thou lookest from thy tower to-day: yet a few years, and the blast of the desert comes, it howls in thy empty court."—OSSIAN.

Through thy battlements, Newstead, the hollow winds whistle;
Thou, the hall of my fathers, art gone to decay:
In thy once smiling garden, the hemlock and thistle
Have choked up the rose which late bloom'd in the way.

Of the mail-cover'd Barons, who proudly to battle
Led their vassals from Europe to Palestine's plain,
The escutcheon and shield, which with every blast rattle,
Are the only sad vestiges now that remain.

No more doth old Robert, with harp-stringing numbers,
Raise a flame in the breast for the war-laurell'd wreath;
Near Askalon's towers John of Horistan slumbers,
Unnerv'd is the hand of his minstrel by death.

Paul and Hubert, too, sleep in the valley of Cressy;
For the safety of Edward and England they fell:
My fathers! the tears of your country redress ye;
How you fought, how you died, still her annals can tell.

On Marston, with Rupert, 'gainst traitors contending,*
Four brothers enrich'd with their blood the bleak field;
For the rights of a monarch their country defending,
Till death their attachment to royalty seal'd.

Shades of heroes, farewell! your descendant, departing
From the seat of his ancestors, bids you adieu!
Abroad, or at home, your remembrance imparting
New courage, he 'll think upon glory and you.

Though a tear dim his eye at this sad separation,
'Tis nature, not fear, that excites his regret;
Far distant he goes, with the same emulation,
The fame of his fathers he ne'er can forget.

That fame and that memory still will he cherish;
He vows that he ne'er will disgrace your renown:
Like you will he live, or like you will he perish:
When decay'd, may he mingle his dust with your own!

When only fourteen his tenant friend dies, and Byron wrote his epitaph, in which, even at that early age (thirteen and a half), he particularly mentions his friend's virtues:—

EPITAPH ON A FRIEND.

"Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσιν ἑῷος."—LAERTIUS.

Oh, Friend! for ever loved, for ever dear!
What fruitless tears have bathed thy honour'd bier!
What sighs re-echo'd to thy parting breath,
Whilst thou wast struggling in the pangs of death!

* Marston Moor, where the adherents of Charles I. were defeated.—Prince Rupert, son of the Elector Palatine, and nephew to Charles I. He afterwards commanded the fleet in the reign of Charles II.

Could tears retard the tyrant in his course;
Could sighs avert his dart's relentless force;
Could youth and virtue claim a short delay,
Or beauty charm the spectre from his prey;
Thou still hadst lived to bless my aching sight,
Thy comrade's honour and thy friend's delight.
If yet thy gentle spirit hover nigh
The spot where now thy mouldering ashes lie,
Here wilt thou read, recorded on my heart,
A grief too deep to trust the sculptor's art.
No marble marks thy couch of lowly sleep,
But living statues there are seen to weep;
Affliction's semblance bends not o'er thy tomb,
Affliction's self deplores thy youthful doom.
What though thy sire lament his failing line,
A father's sorrows cannot equal mine!
Though none, like thee, his dying hour will cheer,
Yet other offspring soothe his anguish here:
But who with me shall hold thy former place?
Thine image, what new friendship can efface?
Ah, none!—a father's tears will cease to flow,
Time will assuage an infant brother's woe;
To all, save one, is consolation known,
While solitary friendship sighs alone.

Other friends succeeded his earliest one and consoled him for his loss. At Harrow, those he loved best were Wingfield, Tattersall, Clare, Delaware, and Long.

His great heart sought to express in verse what it felt for each of them. But it is observable that what touched him most was the excellence of the qualities both of the mind and soul of those he loved. To prove this I shall quote in part a poem which he wrote shortly after leaving Harrow for Cambridge, entitled 'Childish Recollections.' After giving a picture of his life at Harrow in the midst of his companions, and after describing very freshly and vividly the scene when he was chosen Captain of the School, he exclaims:—

"Dear honest race! though now we meet no more,
One last long look on what we were before—
Our first kind greetings, and our last adieu—
Drew tears from eyes unused to weep with you.
Through splendid circles, fashion's gaudy world,
Where folly's glaring standard waves unfurl'd,
I plunged to drown in noise my fond regret,
And all I sought or hoped was to forget.
Vain wish! if chance some well-remember'd face,
Some old companion of my early race,
Advanced to claim his friend with honest joy,
My eyes, my heart, proclaim'd me still a boy;
The glittering scene, the fluttering groups around,
Were quite forgotten when my friend was found;
The smiles of beauty—(for, alas! I've known
What 't is to bend before Love's mighty throne)—
The smiles of beauty, though those smiles were dear,
Could hardly charm me, when that friend was near;
My thoughts bewilder'd in the fond surprise,
The woods of Ida danced before my eyes;
I saw the sprightly wand'rers pour along,
I saw and join'd again the joyous throng;
Panting, again I traced her lofty grove,
And friendship's feelings triumph'd over love."

After deploring his fate :—

"Stern Death forbade my orphan youth to share
The tender guidance of a father's care.

* * * * * *

"What brother springs a brother's love to seek?
What sister's gentle kiss has prest my cheek?

* * * * * *

"Thus must I cling to some endearing hand,
And none more dear than Ida's social band:"—

he goes on to name his dearest comrades, giving them each a fictitious name. Alonzo is Wingfield; Davus, Tattersall; Lycus, Lord Clare; Euryalus, Lord Delaware; and Cleon, Long :—

"Alonzo! best and dearest of my friends,
Thy name ennobles him who thus commends:
From this fond tribute thou canst gain no praise:
The praise is his who now that tribute pays.

Oh! in the promise of thy early youth,
If hope anticipate the words of truth,
Some loftier bard shall sing thy glorious name,
To build his own upon thy deathless fame.
Friend of my heart, and foremost of the list
Of those with whom I lived supremely blest,
Oft have we drain'd the font of ancient lore;
Though drinking deeply, thirsting still the more.
Yet, when confinement's lingering hour was done,
Our sports, our studies, and our souls were one:
Together we impell'd the flying ball;
Together waited in our tutor's hall;
Together join'd in cricket's manly toil,
Or shared the produce of the river's spoil;
Or, plunging from the green declining shore,
Our pliant limbs the buoyant billows bore;
In every element, unchanged, the same,
All, all that brothers should be, but the name.

Nor yet are you forgot, my jocund boy!
Davus, the harbinger of childish joy;
For ever foremost in the ranks of fun,
The laughing herald of the harmless pun;
Yet with a breast of such materials made—
Anxious to please, of pleasing half afraid;
Candid and liberal, with a heart of steel
In danger's path, though not untaught to feel.
Still I remember, in the factious strife,
The rustic's musket aim'd against my life:
High pois'd in air the massy weapon hung,
A cry of horror burst from every tongue;
Whilst I, in combat with another foe,
Fought on, unconscious of th' impending blow;
Your arm, brave boy, arrested his career—
Forward you sprung, insensible to fear;
Disarm'd and baffled by your conquering hand,
The grovelling savage roll'd upon the sand:
An act like this, can simple thanks repay?
Or all the labours of a grateful lay?
Oh no! whene'er my breast forgets the deed,
That instant, Davus, it deserves to bleed.

Lycus! on me thy claims are justly great:
Thy milder virtues could my muse relate,
To thee alone, unrivall'd, would belong
The feeble efforts of my lengthen'd song.
Well canst thou boast, to lead in senates fit,
A Spartan firmness with Athenian wit:

Though yet in embryo these perfections shine,
Lycus! thy father's fame will soon be thine.
Where learning nurtures the superior mind,
What may we hope from genius thus refin'd!
When time at length matures thy growing years,
How wilt thou tower above thy fellow peers!
Prudence and sense, a spirit bold and free,
With honour's soul, united, beam in thee.

Shall fair Euryalus pass by unsung?
From ancient lineage, not unworthy sprung:
What though one sad dissension bade us part?
That name is yet embalm'd within my heart;
Yet at the mention does that heart rebound,
And palpitate, responsive to the sound.
Envy dissolved our ties, and not our will:
We once were friends,—I'll think we are so still.
A form unmatch'd in nature's partial mould,
A heart untainted, we in thee behold:
Yet not the senate's thunder thou shalt wield,
Nor seek for glory in the tented field;
To minds of ruder texture these be given—
Thy soul shall nearer soar its native heaven.
Haply, in polish'd courts might be thy seat,
But that thy tongue could never forge deceit:
The courtier's supple bow and sneering smile,
The flow of compliment, the slippery wile,
Would make that breast with indignation burn,
And all the glittering snares to tempt thee spurn.
Domestic happiness will stamp thy fate;
Sacred to love, unclouded e'er by hate;
The world admire thee, and thy friends adore;
Ambition's slave alone would toil for more.

Now last, but nearest, of the social band,
See honest, open, generous Cleon stand;
With scarce one speck to cloud the pleasing scene,
No vice degrades that purest soul serene.
On the same day our studious race begun,
On the same day our studious race was run;
Thus side by side we pass'd our first career,
Thus side by side we strove for many a year;
At last concluded our scholastic life,
We neither conquer'd in the classic strife:
As speakers, each supports an equal name,*

* This alludes to the public speeches delivered at the school where the author was educated.

And crowds allow to both a partial fame:
To soothe a youthful rival's early pride,
Though Cleon's candour would the palm divide,
Yet candour's self compels me now to own
Justice awards it to my friend alone.

Oh! friends regretted, scenes for ever dear,
Remembrance hails you with her warmest tear!
Drooping, she bends o'er pensive Fancy's urn,
To trace the hours which never can return;
Yet with the retrospection loves to dwell,
And soothe the sorrows of her last farewell!
Yet greets the triumph of my boyish mind,
As infant laurels round my head were twined,
When Probus' praise repaid my lyric song,
Or placed me higher in the studious throng;
Or when my first harangue received applause,
His sage instruction the primeval cause,
What gratitude to him my soul possest,
While hope of dawning honours fill'd my breast!
For all my humble fame, to him alone
The praise is due, who made that fame my own.
Oh! could I soar above these feeble lays,
These young effusions of my early days,
To him my muse her noblest strain would give:
The song might perish, but the theme might live.
Yet why for him the needless verse essay?
His honoured name requires no vain display:
By every son of grateful Ida blest,
It finds an echo in each youthful breast;
A fame beyond the glories of the proud,
Or all the plaudits of the venal crowd.

Ida! not yet exhausted is the theme,
Nor closed the progress of my youthful dream.
How many a friend deserves the grateful strain!
What scenes of childhood still unsung remain!
Yet let me hush this echo of the past,
This parting song, the dearest and the last;
And brood in secret o'er those hours of joy,
To me a silent and a sweet employ,
While, future hope and fear alike unknown,
I think with pleasure on the past alone;
Yes, to the past alone my heart confine,
And chase the phantom of what once was mine.

Ida! still o'er thy hills in joy preside,
And proudly steer through time's eventful tide;

Still may thy blooming sons thy name revere,
Smile in thy bower, but quit thee with a tear,—
That tear, perhaps, the fondest which will flow
O'er their last scene of happiness below.
Tell me, ye hoary few, who glide along,
The feeble veterans of some former throng,
Whose friends, like autumn leaves by tempests whirl'd,
Are swept for ever from this busy world;
Revolve the fleeting moments of your youth,
While Care as yet withheld her venom'd tooth;
Say if remembrance days like these endears
Beyond the rapture of succeeding years?
Say, can ambition's fever'd dream bestow
So sweet a balm to soothe your hours of woe?
Can treasures, hoarded for some thankless son,
Can royal smiles, or wreaths by slaughter won,
Can stars or ermine, man's maturer toys
(For glittering baubles are not left to boys),
Recall one scene so much beloved to view
As those where Youth her garland twined for you?
Ah, no! amidst the gloomy calm of age
You turn with faltering hand life's varied page;
Peruse the record of your days on earth,
Unsullied only where it marks your birth;
Still lingering pause above each chequer'd leaf,
And blot with tears the sable lines of grief;
Where Passion o'er the theme her mantle threw,
Or weeping Virtue sigh'd a faint adieu;
But bless the scroll which fairer words adorn,
Traced by the rosy finger of the morn;
When Friendship bow'd before the shrine of Truth,
And Love, without his pinion, smiled on youth."

On leaving Harrow and his best friends, Byron felt that he was saying adieu to youth and to its pleasures, and he was as yet unable to replace these by the feasts of the mind. This filled his heart with regret in addition to the sorrows which he experienced by those reflections upon existence which are common to all poetical natures. The cold discipline of Cambridge fell like ice upon his warm nature. He fell ill, and, by way of seeking a relief to the oppression of his mind, he wrote the above transcribed poem.

Harrow is called Ida, as his friends are denominated by fictitious names. To the college itself, and to the recollections which it brought back to his memory of physical and mental suffering, he addresses himself:—

"Ida! blest spot, where Science holds her reign,
How joyous once I join'd thy youthful train!
Bright in idea gleams thy lofty spire,
Again I mingle with thy playful quire.
* * * * * *
My wonted haunts, my scenes of joy and woe,
Each early boyish friend, or youthful foe;
Our feuds dissolved, but not my friendship past,—
I bless the former, and forgive the last."

The same kind, affectionate disposition can be traced in all his other poems, together with those well-inculcated notions of God's justice, wisdom, and mercy, of toleration and forgiveness, of hatred of falsehood and contempt of prejudices, which never abandoned him throughout his life.

I really pity those who could read 'The Tear' without being touched by its simple, plaintive style, written in the tenderest strain, or 'L'Amitié est l'Amour sans Ailes,' or the lines to the Duke of Dorset on leaving Harrow, or the 'Prayer of Nature,' or his stanzas to Lord Clare, to Lord Delaware, to Edward Long, or his generous forgiveness of Miss Chaworth; or, again, his lines on believing that he was going to die, his answer to a poem called 'The Common Lot,' his reply to Dr. Beecher, and, finally, his address to a companion whose conduct obliged him to withdraw his friendship:—

"What friend for thee, howe'er inclined,
Will deign to own a kindred care?
Who will debase his manly mind,
For friendship every fool may share?

In time forbear; amidst the throng
No more so base a thing be seen;
No more so idly pass along;
Be something, anything, but—mean."

Since our object is to show in these effusions of a youthful mind, its natural beauty, and not that genius which is shortly to be developed by contact with the troubles and pains of this life, it may not be irrelevant to our subject to give in parts, if not entirely, some of the poems which he wrote at this time:—

THE TEAR.

"O lachrymarum fons, tenero sacros
Ducentium ortus ex animo; quater
Felix! in imo qui scatentem
Pectore te, pia Nympha, sensit."—GRAY.

When Friendship or Love our sympathies move,
When Truth in a glance should appear,
The lips may beguile with a dimple or smile,
But the test of affection's a Tear.

Too oft is a smile but the hypocrite's wile,
To mask detestation or fear;
Give me the soft sigh, whilst the soul-telling eye
Is dimm'd for a time with a Tear.

Mild Charity's glow, to us mortals below,
Shows the soul from barbarity clear;
Compassion will melt where this virtue is felt,
And its dew is diffused in a Tear.

The man doom'd to sail with the blast of the gale,
Through billows Atlantic to steer,
As he bends o'er the wave which may soon be his grave,
The green sparkles bright with a Tear.

The soldier braves death for a fanciful wreath
In glory's romantic career;
But he raises the foe when in battle laid low,
And bathes every wound with a Tear.

If with high-bounding pride he return to his bride,
Renouncing the gore-crimson'd spear,
All his toils are repaid, when, embracing the maid,
From her eyelid he kisses the Tear.

Sweet scene of my youth! seat of Friendship and Truth,*
Where love chased each fast-fleeting year,
Loth to leave thee, I mourn'd, for a last look I turn'd,
But thy spire was scarce seen through a Tear.

Though my vows I can pour to my Mary no more,
My Mary to love once so dear,
In the shade of her bower I remember the hour
She rewarded those vows with a Tear.

By another possest, may she live ever blest!
Her name still my heart must revere:
With a sigh I resign what I once thought was mine,
And forgive her deceit with a Tear.

Ye friends of my heart, ere from you I depart,
This hope to my breast is most near:
If again we shall meet in this rural retreat,
May me meet, as we part, with a Tear.

When my soul wings her flight to the regions of night,
And my corse shall recline on its bier,
As ye pass by the tomb where my ashes consume,
Oh! moisten their dust with a Tear.

May no marble bestow the splendour of woe,
Which the children of vanity rear;
No fiction of fame shall blazon my name,
All I ask—all I wish—is a Tear."

L'AMITIÉ EST L'AMOUR SANS AILES.

Why should my anxious breast repine,
Because my youth is fled?
Days of delight may still be mine;
Affection is not dead.
In tracing back the years of youth,
One firm record, one lasting truth,
Celestial consolation brings;
Bear it, ye breezes, to the seat,
Where first my heart responsive beat,—
"Friendship is Love without his wings!"

---

* Harrow.

Through few, but deeply chequer'd years,
What moments have been mine!
Now half-obscured by clouds of tears,
Now bright in rays divine;
Howe'er my future doom be cast,
My soul, enraptured with the past,
To one idea fondly clings;
Friendship! that thought is all thine own,
Worth worlds of bliss, that thought alone—
"Friendship is Love without his wings!"

Where yonder yew-trees lightly wave
Their branches on the gale,
Unheeded heaves a simple grave,
Which tells the common tale;
Round this unconscious schoolboys stray,
Till the dull knell of childish play
From yonder studious mansion rings;
But here when'er my footsteps move,
My silent tears too plainly prove
"Friendship is Love without his wings!"

Oh, Love! before thy glowing shrine
My early vows were paid;
My hopes, my dreams, my heart was thine,
But these are now decay'd;
For thine are pinions like the wind,
No trace of thee remains behind,
Except, alas! thy jealous stings.
Away, away! delusive power,
Thou shalt not haunt my coming hour;
Unless, indeed, without thy wings.

Seat of my youth! thy distant spire
Recalls each scene of joy;
My bosom glows with former fire,—
In mind again a boy.
Thy grove of elms, thy verdant hill,
Thy every path delights me still,
Each flower a double fragrance flings;
Again, as once, in converse gay,
Each dear associate seems to say,
"Friendship is Love without his wings!"

My Lycus! wherefore dost thou weep?
Thy falling tears restrain;
Affection for a time may sleep,
But, oh! 't will wake again.

Think, think, my friend, when next we meet,
Our long-wish'd interview, how sweet!
From this my hope of rapture springs;
While youthful hearts thus fondly swell,
Absence, my friend, can only tell,
"Friendship is Love without his wings!"

In one, and one alone deceived,
Did I my error mourn?
No—from oppressive bonds relieved,
I left the wretch to scorn.
I turn'd to those my childhood knew,
With feelings warm, with bosoms true,
Twined with my heart's according strings;
And till those vital chords shall break,
For none but these my breast shall wake
Friendship, the power deprived of wings!

Ye few! my soul, my life is yours,
My memory and my hope;
Your worth a lasting love insures,
Unfetter'd in its scope;
From smooth deceit and terror sprung
With aspect fair and honey'd tongue,
Let Adulation wait on kings;
With joy elate, by snares beset,
We, we, my friends, can ne'er forget
"Friendship is Love without his wings!"

Fictions and dreams inspire the bard
Who rolls the epic song;
Friendship and truth be my reward—
To me no bays belong;
If laurell'd Fame but dwells with lies,
Me the enchantress ever flies,
Whose heart and not whose fancy sings;
Simple and young, I dare not feign;
Mine be the rude yet heartfelt strain,
"Friendship is Love without his wings!"

December, 1806.

These early poems are well characterised by the impression which they produced upon Sir Robert Dallas, a man of taste and talent, who, though a bigot and a prey to prejudices of all kinds, hastened, nevertheless, after reading them, to compliment the author in the

following words:—"Your poems are not only beautiful as compositions, but they also denote an honourable and upright heart, and one prone to virtue."

This eulogium is well deserved, and I pity those who could read the 'Hours of Idleness' without liking their youthful writer. If we had space enough, we fain would follow the young man from Cambridge to the mysterious Abbey of Newstead, where he loved to invite his friends and institute with them a monastery of which he proclaimed himself the Abbot—an amusement really most innocent in itself, and which bigotry and folly alone could consider reprehensible. With what pleasure he would show that in the monastery of Newstead its abbot lived the simplest and most austere existence,—"a life of study," as Washington Irving describes it, from what he heard Nanna Smyth say of it some years after Byron's death. How delighted we should be to follow him in his first travels in search of experience of life, and when his genius revealed itself in that light which was shortly to make him the idol of the public and the hatred of the envious. We could show him to have been always the same kind-hearted man, by whom severity and injustice were never had recourse to except against himself, and whose melancholy was too often the result of broken illusions and disappointments. His simple and noble character, having always before it an ideal perfection, perpetually by comparison, thought itself at fault; and the world, who could not comprehend the exquisite delicacy of his mind, took for granted the reputation he gave himself, and made him a martyr till heaven should give him time to become a saint.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRIENDSHIPS OF LORD BYRON.

THE extraordinary part which friendship played in Lord Byron's life is another proof of his goodness. His friendships may be divided into two categories: the friendships of his heart, and those of his mind. To the first class belong those which he made at Harrow and in his early Cambridge days, while his later acquaintances at the University matured into friends of the second category. These had great influence over his mind. The names of those of the first category who were dearest to him, and who were alive when he left Harrow for Cambridge (for he had lost some very intimate friends while still at Harrow, and among these Curzon), were—

Wingfield.	Clare.
Delaware.	Long.
Tattersall.	Eddleston.

Harness.

I will say a word of each, so as to show that Byron in the selection of his friends was guided instinctively by the qualities of those he loved.

WINGFIELD.

The Hon. John Wingfield, of the Coldstream Guards, was a brother of Richard fourth Viscount

Powerscourt, and died of fever at Coimbra, on the 14th of May, 1811, in his 20th year.

"Of all beings on earth," says Byron, "I was perhaps at one time more attached to Poor Wingfield than to any. I knew him during the best part of his life and the happiest portion of mine."

When he heard of the death of this beloved companion of his youth, he added the two following stanzas to the first canto of 'Childe Harold:'—

XCI.

"And thou, my friend!—since unavailing woe
Bursts from my heart, and mingles with the strain—
Had the sword laid thee with the mighty low,
Pride might forbid e'en Friendship to complain:
But thus unlaurel'd to descend in vain,
By all forgotten, save the lonely breast,
And mix unbleeding with the boasted slain,
While Glory crowns so many a meaner crest!
What hadst thou done, to sink so peacefully to rest?

XCII.

"Oh, known the earliest, and esteem'd the most!
Dear to a heart where nought was left so dear!
Though to my hopeless days for ever lost,
In dreams deny me not to see thee here!
And Morn in secret shall renew the tear
Of Consciousness awaking to her woes,
And Fancy hover o'er thy bloodless bier,
Till my frail frame return to whence it rose,
And mourn'd and mourner lie united in repose."

Writing to Dallas on the 7th of August, 1812, he says, "Wingfield was among my best and dearest friends; one of the very few I can never regret to have loved." And on the 7th of September, speaking of the death of Matthews, in whom he said he had lost a friend and a guide, he wrote to Dallas to say: "In Wingfield I have lost a friend only; but

one I could have wished to precede in his long journey."

TATTERSALL (DAVUS).

The Rev. John Cecil Tattersall, B.A., of Christ Church, Oxford, died on the 8th of October, 1812, aged 24.

"His knowledge," says a writer in the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' "was extensive and deep; his affections were sincere and great. By his extreme aversion to hypocrisy, he was so far from assuming the appearance of virtue, that most of his good qualities remained hidden, while he was most anxious to reveal the slighest fault into which he had fallen. He was a stanch friend, and a stranger to all enmity; he behaved loyally to men when alive, and died full of confidence and trust in God."

DELAWARE (EURYALUS).

George John fifth Earl of Delaware, born in October, 1791, succeeded to his father in July, 1795.

Lord Byron wrote from Harrow on the 25th of October, 1804:—

"I am very comfortable here; my friends are not numerous, but choice. Among the first of these I place Delaware, who is very amiable and my great friend. He is younger than I am, but is gifted with the finest character. He is the most intelligent creature on earth, and is besides particularly good-looking, which is a charm in women's eyes."

In consequence of a misunderstanding, or rather of a false accusation,—of which I shall speak elsewhere, in order to show the generosity of Lord Byron's

character,—a coolness took place in their friendship. A charming piece in the 'Hours of Idleness' alludes to it, and shows well the nature of his mind. I will only quote the seventh stanza:—

"You knew that my soul, that my heart, my existence,
If danger demanded, were wholly your own;
You knew me unalter'd by years or by distance,
Devoted to love and to friendship alone."

CLARE (LYCUS).

John Fitzgibbon, second Earl of Clare, succeeded to his father in 1802; was twelve years Chancellor of Ireland, and, later, Governor of Bombay.

Lord Byron wrote of him at Ravenna:—

"I never hear the name of Clare without my heart beating even now, and I am writing in 1821, with all the feelings of 1803, 4, 5, and *ad infinitum*."

He had kept all the letters of his early friends, and among these is one of Lord Clare's, in which the energy of his mind appears even through the language of the child. At the bottom of this letter and in Byron's hand, is a note written years after, showing his tender and amiable feelings:—

"This letter was written at Harrow by Lord Clare, then, and I trust ever, my beloved friend. When we were both students, he sent it to me in my study, in consequence of a brief childish misunderstanding, the only one we ever had. I keep this note only to show him, and laugh with him at the remembrance of the insignificance of our first and last quarrel.

"BYRON."

Besides mentioning Lord Clare in Childish Recol-

lections,' his 'Hour of Idleness" contain another poem addressed to him, which begins thus:—

TO THE EARL OF CLARE.

"Tu semper amoris
Sis memor, et cari comitis ne abscedat imago."—VAL. FLAC.

Friend of my youth! when young we roved,
Like striplings, mutually beloved,
With friendship's purest glow,
The bliss which winged those rosy hours
Was such as pleasure seldom showers
On mortals here below.

The recollection seems alone
Dearer than all the joys I've known,
When distant far from you:
Though pain, 'tis still a pleasing pain,
To trace those days and hours again,
And sigh again, adieu!

* * * * * *

Our souls, my friend! which once supplied
One wish, nor breathed a thought beside,
Now flow in different channels:
Disdaining humbler rural sports,
'Tis yours to mix in polish'd courts,
And shine in fashion's annals:

* * * * * *

I think I said 'twould be your fate
To add one star to royal state:—
May regal smiles attend you!
And should a noble monarch reign,
You will not seek his smiles in vain,
If worth can recommend you.

Yet since in danger courts abound,
Where specious rivals glitter round,
From snares may saints preserve you;
And grant your love or friendship ne'er
From any claim a kindred care,
But those who best deserve you!

Not for a moment may you stray
From truth's secure, unerring way!

May no delights decoy!
O'er roses may your footsteps move,
Your smiles be ever smiles of love,
Your tears be tears of joy!

Oh! if you wish that happiness
Your coming days and years may bless,
And virtues crown your brow;
Be still, as you were wont to be,
Spotless as you've been known to me,—
Be still as you are now.

And though some trifling share of praise,
To cheer my last declining days,
To me were doubly dear,
Whilst blessing your beloved name,
I'd waive at once a *poet's* fame,
To prove a *prophet* here.

In 1821, as he was going to Pisa, Byron met his old and dear friend Clare on the route to Bologna, and speaks of their meeting in the following terms:—

"'There is a strange coincidence sometimes in the little things of this world, Sancho,' says Sterne, in a letter (if I mistake not), and so I have often found it. At page 128, article 91, of this collection, I had alluded to my friend Lord Clare in terms such as my feelings suggested. About a week or two afterwards I met him on the road between Imola and Bologna, after an interval of seven or eight years. He was abroad in 1814, and came home just as I set out in 1816.

"This meeting annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of Harrow. It was a new and inexplicable feeling, like rising from the grave, to me. Clare, too, was much agitated—more in appearance than I was myself; for I could feel his heart beat to his fingers' ends, unless, indeed, it was the pulse of my own which made me think so. He told me, that I should find a

note from him left at Bologna. I did. We were obliged to part for our different journeys—he for Rome, I for Pisa—but with the promise to meet again in the spring. We were but five minutes together, and on the public road; but I hardly recollect an hour of my existence which could be weighed against those few minutes. . . . Of all I have ever known he has always been the least altered in everything from the excellent qualities and kind affections which attached me to him so strongly at school. I should hardly have thought it possible for society to leave a being with so little of the leaven of bad passions.

"I do not speak from personal experience only, but from all I have ever heard of him from others during absence and distance."

"My greatest friend, Lord Clare, is at Rome," he wrote to Moore from Pisa, in March, 1822: "we met on the road, and our meeting was quite sentimental —really pathetic on both sides. I have always loved him better than any male thing in the world."

In June Lord Clare came to visit Byron, and on the 8th of that month Byron wrote to Moore:—

"A few days ago my earliest and dearest friend, Lord Clare, came over from Geneva on purpose to see me before he returned to England. As I have always loved him, since I was thirteen at Harrow, better than any male thing in the world, I need hardly say what a melancholy pleasure it was to see him for a day only; for he was obliged to resume his journey immediately."

On another occasion he told Medwin that there is no pleasure in existence like that of meeting an early friend.

"Lord Clare's visit," says Madame G——, "gave Byron the greatest joy. The last day they spent together at Leghorn was most melancholy. Byron had a kind of presentiment that he should never see his friend again, and in speaking of him, for a long time after, his eyes always filled with tears."

LONG (CLEON).

Edward Long was with Lord Byron at Harrow and at Cambridge. He entered the Guards, and distinguished himself in the expedition to Copenhagen. As he was on his way to join the army in the Peninsula, in 1809, the ship in which he sailed was run down by another vessel, and Long was drowned with several others.

Long's friendship contributed to render Byron's stay at Cambridge bearable after his beloved Harrow days.

"Long," says Lord Byron, "was one of those good and amiable creatures who live but a short time. He had talents and qualities far too rare not to make him very much regretted." He depicts him as a lively companion, with an occasional strange touch of melancholy. One would have said he anticipated as it were, the fate which awaited him.

The letter which he wrote to Byron, on leaving the University to enter the Guards, was so full of sadness that it contrasted strangely with his habitual humour.

"His manners," says Lord Byron, "were amiable and gentle, and he had a great disposition to look at the comical side of things. He was a musician, and played on several instruments, especially

the flute and the violincello. We spent our evenings with music, but I was only a listener. Our principal beverage consisted in soda-water. During the day we rode, swam, walked, and read together; but we only spent one summer with each other."

On his leaving Cambridge, Byron addressed to him the following lines:—

To EDWARD NOEL LONG, ESQ.

"Nil ego contulerim jocundo sanus amico."—HORACE.

"Dear Long, in this sequester'd scene,
While all around in slumber lie,
The joyous days which ours have been
Come rolling fresh on Fancy's eye;
Thus if amidst the gathering storm,
While clouds the darken'd noon deform,
Yon heaven assumes a varied glow,
I hail the sky's celestial bow,
Which spreads the sign of future peace,
And bids the war of tempests cease.
Ah! though the present brings but pain,
I think those days may come again;
Or if, in melancholy mood,
Some lurking envious fear intrude,
To check my bosom's fondest thought,
And interrupt the golden dream,
I crush the fiend with malice fraught,
And still indulge my wonted theme.
Although we ne'er again can trace
In Granta's vale the pedant's lore;
Nor through the groves of Ida chase
Our raptured visions as before,
Though Youth has flown on rosy pinion,
And Manhood claims his stern dominion,
Age will not every hope destroy,
But yield some hours of sober joy.

Yes, I will hope that Time's broad wing
Will shed around some dews of spring:
But if his scythe must sweep the flowers
Which bloom among the fairy bowers,
Where smiling youth delights to dwell,
And hearts with early rapture swell;

If frowning age, with cold control,
Confines the current of the soul,
Congeals the tear of Pity's eye,
Or checks the sympathetic sigh,
Or hears unmoved misfortune's groan,
And bids me feel for self alone;
Oh, may my bosom never learn
To soothe its wonted heedless flow,
Still, still despise the censor stern,
But ne'er forget another's woe.
Yes, as you knew me in the days
O'er which Remembrance yet delays,
Still may I rove, untutor'd, wild,
And even in age at heart a child."

"Though now on airy visions borne,
To you my soul is still the same.
Oft has it been my fate to mourn,
And all my former joys are tame.
But hence! ye hours of sable hue!
Your frowns are gone, my sorrows o'er:
By every bliss my childhood knew,
I'll think upon your shade no more.
Thus, when the whirlwind's rage is past,
And caves their sullen roar enclose,
We heed no more the wintry blast,
When lull'd by zephyr to repose."

Long's death was the cause of great grief to Lord Byron.

"Long's father," said he, "has written to ask me to write his son's epitaph. I promised to do it, but I never had the strength to finish it."

I will add that Mr. Wathen having gone to visit Lord Byron at Ravenna, and having told him that he knew Long, Byron henceforth treated him with the utmost cordiality. He spoke of Long and of his amiable qualities, until he could no longer hide his tears.

In the month of October, 1805, Lord Byron left Harrow for Trinity College, Cambridge, and in 1821 he thus described himself, and his own feelings on leaving his beloved Ida for a new scene of life:—

"When I went to College it was for me a most painful event. I left Harrow against my wish, and so took it to heart, that before I left I never slept for counting the days which I had still to spend there. In the second place, I wished to go to Oxford and not to Cambridge; and, in the third place, I found myself so isolated in this new world, that my mind was perfectly depressed by it.

"Not that my companions were not sociable: quite the contrary; they were particularly lively, hospitable, rich, noble, and much more gay than myself. I mixed, dined, and supped with them; but, I don't know why, the most painful and galling sensation of life was that of feeling I was no longer a child."

His grief was such that he fell ill, and it was during that illness that he wrote and partly dictated the poem 'Recollections of Childhood,' in which he mentions and describes all his dear comrades of Harrow, with that particular charm of expression and thought which the heart alone can inspire.

It was again under the same impression that he wrote the most melancholy lines in the 'Hours of Idleness,' where the regret of the past delightful days of his childhood, spent at his dear Ida, ever comes prominently forward.

"I would I were a careless child,"

he exclaims in one poem, and finishes the same by the lines,—

"Oh that to me the wings were given
Which bear the turtle to her nest!
Then would I cleave the vault of Heaven
To flee away, and be at rest."

Life at Harrow appears to have been for him then the ideal of happiness. At times the distant view of the village and college of Harrow, inspires his muse, at others a visit to the college itself, and an hour spent under the shade of an elm in the churchyard. His whole soul is so revealed in these two poems, that I cannot forbear quoting them *in extenso*:—

ON A DISTANT VIEW OF THE VILLAGE AND SCHOOL OF HARROW-ON-THE-HILL.

"Oh! mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos."—VIRGIL.

Ye scenes of my childhood, whose loved recollection
Embitters the present, compared with the past;
Where science first dawn'd on the powers of reflection,
And friendships were form'd, too romantic to last;

Where fancy yet joys to trace the resemblance
Of comrades, in friendship and mischief allied,
How welcome to me your ne'er-fading remembrance,
Which rests in the bosom, though hope is denied!

Again I revisit the hills where we sported,
The streams where we swam, and the fields where we fought;
The school where, loud warn'd by the bell, we resorted,
To pore o'er the precepts by pedagogues taught.

Again I behold where for hours I have ponder'd,
As reclining, at eve, on yon tombstone I lay;
Or round the steep brow of the churchyard I wander'd,
To catch the last gleam of the sun's setting ray.

I once more view the room, with spectators surrounded,
Where, as Zanga, I trod on Alonzo o'erthrown;
While, to swell my young pride, such applauses resounded,
I fancied that Mossop himself was outshone.*

Or, as Lear, I pour'd forth the deep imprecation,
By my daughters of kingdom and reason deprived;
Till, fired by loud plaudits and self-adulation,
I regarded myself as a Garrick revived.

* Mossop, a contemporary of Garrick, famous for his performance of Zanga.

Ye dreams of my boyhood, how much I regret you!
Unfaded your memory dwells in my breast;
Though sad and deserted, I ne'er can forget you:
Your pleasures may still be in fancy possest.

To Ida full oft may remembrance restore me,
While fate shall the shades of the future unroll!
Since darkness o'ershadows the prospect before me,
More dear is the beam of the past to my soul!

But if, through the course of the years which await me,
Some new scene of pleasure should open to view,
I will say, while with rapture the thought shall elate me,
"Oh! such were the days which my infancy knew!"

LINES WRITTEN BENEATH AN ELM IN THE CHURCHYARD OF HARROW.

Spot of my youth! whose hoary branches sigh,
Swept by the breeze that fans thy cloudless sky;
Where now alone I muse, who oft have trod,
With those I loved, thy soft and verdant sod;
With those who, scatter'd far, perchance deplore,
Like me, the happy scenes they knew before:
Oh! as I trace again thy winding hill,
Mine eyes admire, my heart adores thee still,
Thou drooping Elm! beneath whose boughs I lay,
And frequent mused the twilight hours away;
Where, as they once were wont, my limbs recline,
But ah! without the thoughts which then were mine:
How do thy branches, moaning to the blast,
Invite the bosom to recall the past,
And seem to whisper, as they gently swell,
"Take, while thou canst, a lingering, last farewell!"

When fate shall chill, at length, this fever'd breast,
And calm its cares and passions into rest,
Oft have I thought, 't would soothe my dying hour,—
If aught may soothe when life resigns her power,—
To know some humble grave, some narrow cell,
Would hide my bosom where it loved to dwell.
With this fond dream, methinks, 't were sweet to die—
And here it linger'd, here my heart might lie;
Here might I sleep where all my hopes arose;
Scene of my youth, and couch of my repose;
For ever stretch'd beneath this mantling shade,
Press'd by the turf where once my childhood play'd;
Wrapt by the soil that veils the spot I loved,
Mix'd with the earth o'er which my footsteps moved;

Blest by the tongues that charm'd my youthful ear,
Mourn'd by the few my soul acknowledged here;
Deplored by those in early days allied,
And unremember'd by the world beside.

"But although he may for a time," says Moore, "have experienced this kind of moral atomy, it was not in his nature to be long without attaching himself to somebody, and the friendship which he conceived for Eddleston—a man younger than himself, and not at all of his rank in society—even surpassed in ardour all the other attachments of his youth."

EDDLESTON

was one of the choristers at Cambridge. His talent for music attracted Byron's attention. When he lost the society of Long, who had been his sole comfort at Cambridge, he took very much to the company of young Eddleston. One feels how much he was attached to him, on reading those lines in which he thanks Eddleston for a cornelian heart he had sent him :—

THE CORNELIAN.

"No specious splendour of this stone
Endears it to my memory ever;
With lustre only once it shone,
And blushes modest as the giver.

Some, who can sneer at friendship's ties,
Have for my weakness oft reproved me;
Yet still the simple gift I prize,
For I am sure the giver loved me.

He offer'd it with downcast look,
As fearful that I might refuse it;
I told him, when the gift I took,
My only fear should be to lose it."

When Eddleston left college, Lord Byron wrote to Miss Pigott a letter full of regret at having lost

his youthful friend, and thanking her for having taken an interest in him.

"During the whole time we were at Cambridge together," says Byron, "we saw each other every day, summer and winter, and never once found a moment of *ennui*, but parted each day with greater regret. I trust," he added, at the end of his letter, "that you will some day see us together; that is the being I esteem most, though I love several others."

But in the year 1811 Eddleston died of consumption; and Lord Byron wrote to Miss Pigott's mother, to beg of her to return the cornelian heart which he had entrusted to her care, because it had "now acquired a value which he wished it had never had;" the original donor having died at the age of twenty-one, a few months before, and being "the sixth in the space of four months of a series of friends and relations whom he had lost since May."

The cornelian heart was restored, and Byron was informed that he had only entrusted it, but not given it to Miss Pigott. It was on learning of Eddleston's death that Byron added the touching ninth stanza to the second canto of 'Childe Harold.'

After speaking of the hope of meeting again, in a celestial abode, those whom he loved on earth, and all those who taught the truth, he exclaims,—

"There, thou!—whose love and life together fled,
Have left me here to love and live in vain—
Twined with my heart, and can I deem thee dead
When busy Memory flashes on my brain?
Well—I will dream that we may meet again,
And woo the vision to my vacant breast:
If aught of young Remembrance then remain,
Be as it may Futurity's behest,
For me 'twere bliss enough to know thy spirit blest!"

Among the children younger than himself of whom he established himself the protector, one of those he loved best was his fag William Harness.

HARNESS.

The Rev. William Harness is the author of the work entitled the 'Relations between Christianity and Happiness, by one of the oldest and most esteemed friends of Lord Byron.'

Harness was four years younger than Byron, and one of the earliest friends he made at Harrow. Lord Byron had not been long at the school, and had not yet formed any friendship with other boys, when he saw a boy, "still lame from an accident of his childhood, and but just recovered from a severe illness, bullied by a boy much older and stronger than himself." Byron interfered and took his part.

"We both seem perfectly to recollect," says he, "with a mixture of pleasure and regret, the hours we once passed together; and I assure you, most sincerely, they are numbered amongst the happiest of my brief chronicle of enjoyment. I am now getting into years, that is to say, I was twenty a month ago, and another year will send me into the world, to run my career of folly with the rest. I was then just fourteen—you were almost the first of my Harrow friends, certainly the first in my esteem, if not in date; but an absence from Harrow for some time shortly after, and new connexions on your side, and the difference in our conduct, from that turbulent and riotous disposition of mine which impelled me into every species of mischief, all these circum-

stances combined to destroy our intimacy, which affection urged me to continue, and Memory compels me to regret. But there is not a circumstance attending that period, hardly a sentence we exchanged, which is not impressed on my mind at this moment.

"There is another circumstance you do not know: —the first lines I ever attempted at Harrow were addressed to you; but as on our return from the holidays we were strangers, the lines were destroyed.

"I have dwelt longer on this theme than I intended, and I shall now conclude with what I ought to have begun. Will you sometimes write to me? I do not ask it often, and, if we meet, let us be what we should be, and what we were."

Young Harness, gifted with a calm and mild temperament, was being educated for the Church. Besides being always at Harrow, and four years younger than Byron, the life which the latter led at Newstead and at Cambridge did not suit one destined to a career which requires greater severity of demeanour. But the two friends corresponded, and Lord Byron sent him one of his early copies of 'Hours of Idleness.' In the letter which the Rev. W. Harness wrote to Moore, after Byron's death, to tell him the nature of the quarrel which he and Byron had had together, and their subsequent reconciliation, he ends by saying:—

"Our conversation was renewed and continued from that time till his going abroad. Whatever faults Lord Byron may have exhibited towards others, to myself he was always uniformly affectionate. . . I cannot call to mind a single instance

of caprice or unkindness in the whole course of our intimacy to allege against him."

The fault to which Harness alludes, and which he acknowledges, was one of the kind to which Byron was most sensitive, namely, coldness. Having lost some of his early and best friends, Edward Long, and all the others being spread far and near, abroad and in England, following out their respective careers and destiny, Harness was about the only early friend he had near him.

The time was approaching when he was going to leave England, to travel and to learn by study the great book of Nature. His heart was wounded by the injustice which had been done him, by the many disenchantments which he had experienced, by the brutal criticism of his 'Hours of Idleness' from the pen of his relation Lord Carlisle, and by his money difficulties. Unable as yet to foretell the effects of his satire, which had not yet appeared, and the success of which might have consoled him a little for past mortifications, he found in friendship his sole relief, and particularly in the friendship of Harness. At this very critical time, Harness—(be it either through the influence of his family and relations, or through a notion that his principles were rather unsuited to the heterodox opinions of Lord Byron)— behaved coldly towards Byron. Dallas, however, who from puritanism and family pride, and even from jealousy, was rather an enemy of Lord Byron's intellectual friends—(contending that it was they who had instilled into Byron all the anti-orthodox views which the poet had adopted)—makes an exception in favour of Harness.

Byron spoke of Harness with an affection which he hoped was repaid to him. I often met him at Newstead, and both he and Byron had had their portraits taken, which they were to make a present of to one another. It was not until some unknown cause sprung up to establish a coldness between the two friends that their intimacy ceased, and at the same time Harness's visits to Newstead. Byron felt it very keenly.

In what degree the conduct of Harness hurt Lord Byron and contributed to those explosions of misanthropy which, slight and passing as they were; have nevertheless been urged as a reproach against his first and second cantos of 'Childe Harold,' I shall examine later.

Here it is only necessary to say that in a soul such as his, where rancour could never live, such a coldness wounded him without altering his sentiments in any way. After two years' absence he returned to England, and so heartily forgave Harness that he actually wished to dedicate to him the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold,' and only gave up this idea from a generous fear that its dedication might injure him in his clerical profession, on account of certain stanzas in the poem which were not quite orthodox.

"The letter," says Moore, "in which he expresses these delicate sentiments is, unfortunately, lost."

Some months after his return to England he resumed his correspondence with Harness, and both the friends assembled at Newstead. Harness, however, as a clergyman, was severe in his judgments. Byron wrote to him:—

"You are censorious, child: when you are a little

older, you will learn to dislike everybody, but abuse nobody. . . . . I thank you most truly for the concluding part of your letter. I have been of late not much accustomed to kindness from any quarter, and I am not the less pleased to meet with it again from one in whom I had known it earliest. I have not changed in all my ramblings; Harrow, and of course yourself, never left me, and the

'Dulces reminiscitur Argos'

attended me to the very spot to which that sentence alludes in the mind of the fallen Argive. Our intimacy began before we began to date at all, and it rests with you to continue it till the hour which must number it and me with the things that were."

Two days afterwards, he writes to him again a letter full of endearing expressions, couched in a friendly tone of interest, of which the following extracts are instances:—

"And now, child, what art thou doing? Reading, I trust. I want to see you take a degree. Remember, this is the most important period of your life; and don't disappoint your papa and your aunt and all your kin, besides myself.

"You see, *mio carissimo*, what a pestilent correspondent I am likely to become; but then you shall be as quiet at Newstead as you please, and I won't disturb your studies as I do now."

On the 11th of December, of the same year, he invites Moore to Newstead and says, "H—— will be here, and a young friend named Harness, the earliest and dearest I ever had from the third form at Harrow to this hour."

And, finally, he wrote to Harness that he had no greater pleasure than to hear from him; indeed, that it was more than a pleasure.

HIS LATER FRIENDS.

When he had reached his nineteenth year, which was the second of his stay at Cambridge, Byron (having lost sight of most of his Harrow friends to whom he dedicated his verses, and having lost both Long and Eddleston) suddenly found himself launched into the vortex of a University life, for which he had no liking. Happily, however, he was thrown among young men of great distinction, whom fate had then gathered at Cambridge.

"It was so brilliant a constellation," says Moore, "that perhaps such a one will never be seen again." Among these he selected his friends from their literary merit. Those he most distinguished were Hobhouse, Matthews, Banks, and Scroope Davies. They formed a coterie at Cambridge and spent most of their holidays at Newstead.

HOBHOUSE.

Sir John Cam Hobhouse, Bart., since created a peer, under the name of Lord Broughton, is one of the statesmen and writers the memory of whom England most reveres. It is he whom Byron addresses as Moschus in the 'Hints from Horace.' After being Byron's friend at college, he became his faithful companion likewise in his travels, and throughout his shortlived but brilliant career. It was he who accompanied Byron in the fatal journey to Seaham, where

Byron wedded Miss Milbank. It was he who stood best man on that occasion, and it was he whom Byron selected as his executor.

As soon as Byron became of age in 1809, the two friends left England together to visit Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey. The results of these travels were, Byron's first two cantos of 'Childe Harold,' and Hobhouse's 'Journey across Albania, and other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and in Asia.'

On their return to England, their intimacy did not cease. "Hobhouse," Byron was wont to say, "ever gets me out of difficulty;" and in his journal of 1814 he says, "Hobhouse has returned. He is my best friend, the most animated and most amusing, and one whose knowledge is very deep and extensive. Hobhouse told me ten thousand anecdotes of Napoleon, which must be true. Hobhouse is the most interesting of travelling companions, and really excellent."

Lord Byron wished him to be his best man when he married Miss Milbank at Seaham, and after his separation from her Hobhouse joined him in Switzerland. They travelled together through the Oberland, and visited all the scenes which inspired that magnificent poem entitled 'Manfred.' Thence they left for Italy, and visited it from North to South; from the Alps to Rome. The result of this journey was the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold' from Byron, and from Hobhouse a volume of notes, which constitutes a work of very great merit. If such a companion was agreeable to Byron, Byron was not less so to Hobhouse, who deplores a journey he had made with-

out the company of that friend, whose perspicacity of observation and ingenious remarks united in producing that liveliness and good humour, which take away half the sting of fatigue, and soften the aspect of danger and of difficulties.

During his absence from England Byron always insisted that all matters relating to the settlement of his affairs should pass through the hands of Hobhouse, his "alter ego" when near or when absent. His highest testimony of regard and friendship for Hobhouse, however, is to be found in the dedication of the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' which was written in Italy in 1815, and which is as follows :—

CANTO THE FOURTH.

To John Hobhouse, Esq., A.M., F.R.S., &c.

Venice, January 2, 1818.

MY DEAR HOBHOUSE,—After an interval of eight years between the composition of the first and last cantos of Childe Harold, the conclusion of the poem is about to be submitted to the public. In parting with so old a friend, it is not extraordinary that I should recur to one still older and better,—to one who has beheld the birth and death of the other, and to whom I am far more indebted for the social advantages of an enlightened friendship, than—though not ungrateful—I can, or could be, to Childe Harold, for any public favour reflected through the poem on the poet,—to one whom I have known long and accompanied far, whom I have found wakeful over my sickness and kind in my sorrow, glad in my prosperity and firm in my adversity, true in counsel and trusty in peril,—to a friend often tried and never found wanting;—to yourself.

In so doing, I recur from fiction to truth; and in dedicating to you, in its complete or at least concluded state, a poetical work which is the longest, the most thoughtful and comprehensive of my compositions, I wish to do honour to myself by the record of many years' intimacy with a man of learning, of talent, of steadiness, and of honour. It is not for minds like ours to give or to receive flattery; yet the praises of sincerity have ever been permitted to the voice of friendship; and it is not for you, nor even for others, but to relieve a heart which has not elsewhere, or lately, been so much accustomed to the encounter of good-will as to withstand the shock firmly, that I thus attempt to commemorate your good qualities, or rather the advantages which I have derived from their

exertion. Even the recurrence of the date of this letter, the anniversary of the most unfortunate day of my past existence,* but which cannot poison my future while I retain the resource of your friendship, and of my own faculties, will henceforth have a more agreeable recollection for both, inasmuch as it will remind us of this my attempt to thank you for an indefatigable regard, such as few men have experienced, and no one could experience without thinking better of his species and of himself.

It has been our fortune to traverse together, at various periods, the countries of chivalry, history, and fable—Spain, Greece, Asia Minor, and Italy; and what Athens and Constantinople were to us a few years ago, Venice and Rome have been more recently. The poem also, or the pilgrim, or both, have accompanied me from first to last; and perhaps it may be a pardonable vanity which induces me to reflect with complacency on a composition which in some degree connects me with the spot where it was produced, and the objects it would fain describe; and however unworthy it may be deemed of those magical and memorable abodes, however short it may fall of our distant conceptions and immediate impressions, yet as a mark of respect for what is venerable, and of feeling for what is glorious, it has been to me a source of pleasure in the production, and I part with it with a kind of regret, which I hardly suspected that events could have left me for imaginary objects.

With regard to the conduct of the last canto, there will be found less of the pilgrim than in any of the preceding, and that little slightly, if at all, separated from the author speaking in his own person. The fact is, that I had become weary of drawing a line which every one seemed determined not to perceive: like the Chinese in Goldsmith's 'Citizen of the World,' whom nobody would believe to be a Chinese, it was in vain that I asserted, and imagined that I had drawn, a distinction between the author and the pilgrim; and the very anxiety to preserve this difference, and disappointment at finding it unavailing, so far crushed my efforts in the composition, that I determined to abandon it altogether—and have done so. The opinions which have been, or may be, formed on that subject, are *now* a matter of indifference: the work is to depend on itself and not on the writer; and the author, who has no resources in his own mind beyond the reputation, transient or permanent, which is to arise from his literary efforts, deserves the fate of authors.

In the course of the following canto it was my intention, either in the text or in the notes, to have touched upon the present state of Italian literature, and perhaps of manners. But the text, within the limits I proposed, I soon found hardly sufficient for the labyrinth of external objects, and the consequent reflections; and for the whole of the notes, excepting a few of the shortest, I am indebted to yourself, and these were necessarily limited to the elucidation of the text.

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* His marriage.

It is also a delicate, and no very grateful task, to dissert upon the literature and manners of a nation so dissimilar; and requires an attention and impartiality which would induce us—though perhaps no inattentive observers, nor ignorant of the language or customs of the people amongst whom we have recently abode—to distrust, or at least defer our judgment, and more narrowly examine our information. The state of literary as well as political party appears to run, or to *have* run, so high, that for a stranger to steer impartially between them is next to impossible. It may be enough, then, at least for my purpose, to quote from their own beautiful language —"Mi pare che in un paese tutto poetico, che vanta la lingua la più nobile ed insieme la più dolce, tutte tutte le vie diverse si possono tentare, e che sinche la patria di Alfieri e di Monti non ha perduto l'antico valore, in tutte essa dovrebbe essere la prima." Italy has great names still: Canova, Monti, Ugo Foscolo, Pindemonte, Visconti, Morelli, Cicognara, Albrizzi, Mezzophanti, Mai, Mustoxidi, Aglietti, and Vacca, will secure to the present generation an honourable place in most of the departments of art, science, and belles lettres; and in some the very highest. Europe—the World—has but one Canova.

It has been somewhere said by Alfieri, that "La pianta uomo nasce più robusta in Italia che in qualunque altra terra—e che gli stessi atroci delitti che vi si commettono ne sono una prova." Without subscribing to the latter part of his proposition—a dangerous doctrine, the truth of which may be disputed on better grounds, namely, that the Italians are in no respect more ferocious than their neighbours—that man must be wilfully blind, or ignorantly heedless, who is not struck with the extraordinary capacity of this people, or, if such a word be admissible, their *capabilities*, the facility of their acquisitions, the rapidity of their conceptions, the fire of their genius, their sense of beauty, and amidst all the disadvantages of repeated revolutions, the desolation of battles, and the despair of ages, their still unquenched "longing after immortality"—the immortality of independence. And when we ourselves, in riding round the walls of Rome, heard the simple lament of the labourers' chorus, "Roma! Roma! Roma! Roma non è più come era prima," it was difficult not to contrast this melancholy dirge with the bacchanal roar of the songs of exultation still yelled from the London taverns, over the carnage of Mont St. Jean, and the betrayal of Genoa, of Italy, of France, and of the world, by men whose conduct you yourself have exposed in a work worthy of the better days of our history. For me,—

> "Non moverò mai corda
> Ove la turba di sue ciance assorda."

What Italy has gained by the late transfer of nations, it were useless for Englishmen to inquire, till it becomes ascertained that England has acquired something more than a permanent army and a suspended Habeas Corpus; it is enough for them to look at home. For what they have done

abroad, and especially in the south, "verily they *will have* their reward," and at no very distant period.

Wishing you, my dear Hobhouse, a safe and agreeable return to that country whose real welfare can be dearer to none than to yourself, I dedicate to you this poem in its completed state; and repeat once more how truly I am ever, your obliged and affectionate friend,

BYRON.

MATTHEWS.

"Of this remarkable young man, Charles Skinner Matthews," says Moore, "I have already had occasion to speak; but the high station which he held in Lord Byron's affection and admiration may justify a somewhat ampler tribute to his memory.

"There have seldom, perhaps, started together in life so many youths of high promise and hope as were to be found among the society of which Lord Byron formed a part at Cambridge. Among all these young men of learning and talent, the superiority in almost every department of intellect seems to have been, by the ready consent of all, awarded to Matthews. . . . . Young Matthews appears—in spite of some little asperities of temper and manner, which he was already beginning to soften down when snatched away—to have been one of those rare individuals who, while they command deference, can at the same time win regard, and who, as it were, relieve the intense feeling of admiration which they excite by blending it with love."

Matthews died whilst bathing in the Cam.

On the 7th of September, 1811, Byron wrote to Dallas as follows:—"Matthews, Hobhouse, Davies, and myself, formed a coterie of our own at Cambridge and elsewhere. . . . Davies, who is not a

scribbler, has always beaten us all in the war of words. H—— and myself always had the worst of it with the other two, and even M—— yielded to the dashing vivacity of S. D——"

And in another letter:—

"You did not know M——: he was a man of the most astonishing powers."

And again, speaking of his death to Mr. Hodgson, he writes:—

"You will feel for poor Hobhouse; Matthews was the god of his idolatry; and if intellect could exalt a man above his fellows, no one would refuse him pre-eminence."

Matthews died at the time when he was offering himself to compete for a lucrative and honourable position in the University. As soon as his death was known, it was said that if the highest talents could be sure of success, if the strictest principles of honour, and the devotion to him of a multitude of friends could have assured it, his dream would have been realised.

Besides a great superiority of intellect, Matthews was gifted with a very amusing originality of thought, which, joined to a very keen sense of the ridiculous, exercised a kind of irresistible fascination. Lord Byron, who loved a joke better than any one, took great pleasure in all the amusing eccentricities of him who was styled the Dean of Newstead, whilst Byron had been christened by him the Abbot of that place.

Shortly before his death, in 1821, Byron wrote a very amusing letter from Ravenna to Murray, recalling a host of anecdotes relating to Matthews, and which well set forth the clever eccentricity of the

man for whom Byron professed so much esteem and admiration.

SCROOPE DAVIES.

We have already seen what Byron thought of Davies. His cleverness, his great vivacity, and his gaiety, were great resources to Byron in his moments of affliction. When, in 1811, Byron experienced the bitterest loss of his life — that of his mother—he wrote from Newstead to beg that Davies would come and console him.

Shortly after, he wrote to Hodgson to say, "Davies has been here. His gaiety, which death itself cannot change, has been of great service to me: but it must be allowed that our laughter was very false."

We must not forget to mention, among the friends of Byron, William Banks, Mr. Pigott, of Southwell, and Mr. Hodgson, a writer of great merit, who was one of his companions at Newstead, and with whom he corresponded even during his voyage in the East. For all these he maintained throughout life the kindest remembrance, as also for Mr. Beecher, for whom he entertained a regard equal to his affection. Mr. Beecher having disapproved of the moral tendency of his early poems, Lord Byron destroyed in one night the whole of the first edition of those poems, in order to prove his sense of esteem for Mr. Beecher's opinion. In the same category we should place Lord Byron's friendship for Dr. Drury, his tutor at Harrow; but this latter friendship is so marked with feelings of respect, veneration, and gratitude, that I had rather speak of it later, when I shall treat of the last-named

quality, as one of the most noticeable in Lord Byron's character.

GRIEF WHICH HE EXPERIENCED AT THE LOSS OF HIS FRIENDS.

The grief which the loss of his friends occasioned to him was proportioned to the degree of affection which he entertained for them. By a curious fatality he had the misfortune to lose at an early age almost all those he loved. This grief reached its climax on his return from his first travels.

"If," says Moore, "to be able to depict powerfully the painful emotions it is necessary first to have experienced them, or, in other words, if, for the poet to be great, the man must suffer, Lord Byron, it must be owned, paid early this dear price of mastery. In the short space of one month," he says in a note on 'Childe Harold, "I have lost her who gave me being, and most of those who made that being tolerable." Of these young Wingfield, whom we have seen high on the list of his Harrow favourites, died of a fever at Coimbra; and Matthews, the idol of his admiration at Cambridge, was drowned whilst bathing in the Cam. The following letter, written shortly after, shows so powerful a feeling of regret, and displays such real grief, that it is almost painful to peruse it:—

"MY DEAREST DAVIES,

"Some curse hangs over me and mine. My mother lies a corpse in this house; one of my best friends is drowned in a ditch. What can I say, or think, or do? My dear Scroope, if you can spare a moment, do come down to me; I want a friend. Mat-

thews' last letter was written on Friday; on Saturday he was not. In ability who was like Matthews? Come to me; I am almost desolate; left almost alone in the world. I had but you and H—— and M——, and let me enjoy the survivors while I can."

Writing to Dallas on the 1st of August, he says:—

"Besides her who gave me being, I have lost more than one who made that being tolerable. Matthews, a man of the first talents, has perished miserably in the muddy waves of the Cam; my poor schoolfellow Wingfield, at Coimbra, within a month: and whilst I had heard from all three, but not seen one. But let this pass; we shall all one day pass along with the rest; the world is too full of such things, and our very sorrow is selfish."

To Hodgson he writes:—

"Indeed, the blows followed each other so rapidly, that I am yet stupid from the shock; and though I do eat, and drink, and talk, and even laugh at times, yet I can hardly persuade myself that I am awake, did not every morning convince me mournfully to the contrary.

"You will write to me? I am solitary, and I never felt solitude irksome before."

Some months later he heard of the death of his friend Eddlestone, of which he wrote to Dallas in the following terms:—

"I have been again shocked with a death, and have lost one very dear to me in happier times. But 'I have almost forgot the taste of grief,' and 'supped full of horrors' till I have become callous, nor have I a tear left for an event which, five years ago, would have bowed down my head to the earth. It seems as

though I were to experience in my youth the greatest misery of age. My friends fall around me, and I shall be left a lonely tree before I am withered."

On that same day, 11th of October, when his mind was a prey to such grief, he received a letter from Hodgson, advising him to banish all cares and to find in pleasure the distraction he needed. Lord Byron replied by some lines which Moore has reproduced; but the last of which he omitted to give, and which were written only to mystify the excellent Mr. Hodgson, who always looked at everything and every one in a bright light, and whom Byron wished to frighten.

Here are the first lines:—

"'Oh! banish care,—such ever be
The motto of *thy* revelry!
Perchance of *mine* when wassail nights
Renew those riotous delights,
Wherewith the children of Despair
Lull the lone heart, and 'banish care,'
But not in morn's reflecting hour."

Two days after replying in verse, he answered him in prose.

"I am growing nervous—it is really true—really, wretchedly, ridiculously, fineladically, nervous. I can neither read, write, nor amuse myself, or any one else. My days are listless, and my nights restless."

The same day, 11th October, 1811, one of the darkest in his life, he wrote also his first stanza, addressed to Thyrza, of which the pathetic charm seems to rise to the highest pitch.

"To no other but an imaginary being," says Moore, "could he have addressed such tender and melancholy poetical lines."

BYRON'S FRIENDSHIP FOR MOORE.

At this time of his life, whether from the numerous injuries inflicted on him by men and by fate, or from some other circumstance, Byron seemed to be less given to friendships than formerly. He felt the force of friendship as deeply as before, but he became less expansive. Death, in taking so many of his friends away from him, had endeared those who remained still more to his heart, and caused him to seek among these the consolation he wanted. It is not true to say that Lord Byron was left alone entirely, at any time of his life: quite the contrary, he at all times lived in the midst of friends more or less devoted to him. Dallas and Moore pretend that there was a time in his early youth when he had no friends at all; but this time cannot be stated, unless one forgets the names of Hobhouse, Hodgson, Harness, Clare, and many others who never lost sight of him, and unless one forgets the life of devotion which he led at Southwell and at Newstead both before and after his travels in the East.

Dallas and Moore, in speaking of this momentary isolation, in all probability adopted a common prejudice which causes them to believe that a lord must ever be lonely unless he is surrounded by a circle of rich and fashionable companions. The truth is that Byron, having left England immediately on quitting college, only had college connexions, with all of whom he renewed his friendship on his return to the mother country. But it is equally true, and this is to his credit, that he long hesitated to replace departed friends by new ones.

To conquer this repugnance he required a very high degree of esteem for the friend he was about to make, a similarity of tastes, and above all a sympathy based upon real goodness. This was the time of his greatest mental depression. It preceded that splendid epoch in his life, when his star shone with such brilliancy in the literary sphere, thanks to 'Childe Harold,' and in the world of politics through his parliamentary successes, which had earned for him the praises of the whole nation. Then did friends present themselves in scores, but out of these few were chosen.

Among the great men of the day who surrounded him, he took to several, and in particular to Lord Holland, a Whig like himself, and a man equally distinguished for the excellence of his heart as for his rare intellect. Lord Holland's hospitality was the pride of England. Byron also conceived a liking for Lord Lansdowne,—the model of every virtue, social and domestic; for Lord Dudley, whose wit so charmed him; for Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, brother to Lord Kinnaird, whom Byron called his most devoted friend in politics and in literature; for all those first notabilities of the day, Rogers, Sheridan, Curran, Mackintosh, for all of whom he may be said to have entertained a feeling akin to friendship. But all these were friends of the moment; friends whom the relations of every-day life in the world of fashion had brought together, and whose talents exacted admiration, and hence he formed ties which may be styled friendship, provided the strict sense of that word is not understood. Byron felt this more than any one.

One man, however, contrived to get such a hold

on his mind and heart, that he became truly his friend, and exercised a salutary influence over him. This man, who contributed to dispel the dark clouds which hung over Byron's mind, and was the first to charm him in his new life of fashion, was no other than Thomas Moore.

This new intimacy had not, it is true, the freshness of his early friendships, formed, as these were, in the freshness of a young heart, and therefore without any worldly calculations. Moore was even ten years his senior. But his affection for Moore, founded as it was upon a similarity of tastes, upon mutual reminiscences, esteem and admiration, soon developed itself into a friendship which never changed. The circumstances under which Byron and Moore became friends speak too highly for the credit of both not to be mentioned here, and we must therefore say a few words on the subject.

Byron, as the reader knows, had in his famous satire of 'English Bards,' &c., attacked the poems of Moore as having an immoral tendency. Instead of interpreting the beautiful Irish melodies in their figurative sense, Byron had taken the direct sense conveyed in their love-inspiring words, and considered them as likely to produce effeminate and unhealthy impressions.

"Who in soft guise, surrounded by a choir
Of virgins melting, not to Vesta's fire,
With sparkling eyes, and cheek by passion flush'd,
Strikes his wild lyre, whilst listening dames are hush'd?
'Tis Little! young Catullus of his day,
As sweet, but as immoral, in his lay!
* * * * * * *
Yet kind to youth, ...
She bids thee 'mend thy line and sin no more.'"

Lord Byron was always of opinion that literature, when it tends to exalt the more tender sentiments of our nature, pure as these may be, is ever injurious to the preservation of those manly and energetic qualities which are so essential for the accomplishment of a noble mission here below. This opinion is illustrated by the occasional extreme energy of his heroes, and by his repugnance to introduce love into his dramas. If this reproach offended Moore a little, Lord Byron's allusion to his duel with Jeffrey at Chalk Farm in 1806, where it was said that the pistols of each were not loaded, must have wounded him still more, and he wrote a letter to Lord Byron which must, it would seem, have brought on a duel.

Lord Byron was then travelling in the Levant, and the letter remained with his agent in London. It was only two years after, on his return from his travels, that he received it. An exchange of letters with Moore took place, and such was the "good sense, self-possession and frankness" of Byron's conduct in the matter, that Moore was quite pacified, and all chances of a duel disappeared with the reconciliation of both, at the request of each.

The reconciliation took place under the auspices of Rogers, and at a dinner given by the latter for that purpose. After speaking of his extraordinary beauty, and of the delicacy and prudence of his conduct, Moore, in referring to this dinner, ends by saying, "Such did I find Lord Byron on my first experience of him, and such, so open and manly-minded did I find him to the last."

Byron, too, was influenced by the charm of Moore's acquaintance, and so dear to him became the latter's

society through that kind of electric current which appears to run through some people and forms between them an unbounded sympathy, that it actually succeeded in dispelling the sombre ideas which then possessed his soul.

Their similarity of tastes, and at the same time those differences of character which are so essential to the development of the intellect of two sympathetic minds, were admirably adapted to form the charm which existed in their relations with one another.

This sympathy, however, would never have found a place in the mind of Lord Byron had it not sprung from his heart. Amiability was essential in his friends before he could love them; and though Moore had not that quality in its highest degree, still he had it sufficiently for Lord Byron to say in one of his notes, "I have received the most amiable letter possible from Moore. I really think him the most kind-hearted man I ever met. Besides which, his talents are equal to his sentiments."

His sympathy for Moore was such that the mention of his name was enough to awaken his spirits and give him joy. This is palpable in his letters to Moore, which are masterpieces of talent.

His cordial friendship for Moore was never once affected by the series of triumphs which followed its formation, and which made the whole world bow before his genius. "The new scenes which opened before him with his successes," says Moore, "far from detaching us from one another, multiplied, on the contrary, the opportunities of meeting each other, and thereby of strengthening our intimacy."

This excessive liking for Moore was kept up by all the force which constancy lends to affection. One of Byron's most remarkable qualities was great constancy in his likes, tastes, and a particular attachment to the recollections of his childhood. At the age of fifteen, Moore's 'Melodies' already delighted him. "I have just been looking over Little Moore's Melodies, which I knew by heart at fifteen." In 1803 he wrote from Ravenna: "Hum! I really believe that all the bad things I ever wrote or did are attributable to that rascally book."

We have seen that at Southwell he used even to ask Miss Chaworth and Miss Pigott to sing him songs of Moore. At Cambridge, what reconciled him to leaving Harrow were the hours which he spent with his beloved Edward Long, with whom he used to read Moore's poetry after having listened to Long's music.

He already then had a sympathy for Moore, and a wish to know him. The latter's place was therefore already marked out in Byron's heart, even before he was fortunate enough to know him.

Moore's straitened means often obliged him to leave London. Then Byron was seized with a fit of melancholy.

"I might be sentimental to-day, but I won't," he said. "The truth is that I have done all I can since I am in this world to harden my heart, and have not yet succeeded, though there is a good chance of my doing so.

"I wish your line and mine were a little less parallel, they might occasionally meet, which they do not now.

"I am sometimes inclined to write that I am ill, so as to see you arrive in London, where no one was ever so happy to see you as I am, and where there is no one I would sooner seek consolation from, were I ill."

Then, according to his habitual custom of ever depreciating himself morally, he writes to Moore, in answer to the latter's compliments about his goodness. "But they say the devil is amusing when pleased, and I must have been more venomous than the old serpent, to have hissed or stung in your company."

His sympathy for Moore went so far as to induce him to believe that he was capable of everything that is good.

"Moore," says he, in his memoranda of 1813, "has a reunion of exceptional talents—poetry, music, voice, he has all—and an expression of countenance such as no one will ever have.

"What humour in his poet's bag! There is nothing that Moore cannot do if he wishes.

"He has but one fault, which I mourn every day —he is not here."

He even liked to attribute to Moore successes which the latter only owed to himself. Byron had, as the reader knows, the most musical of voices. Once heard, it could not be forgotten.* He had never learnt music, but his ear was so just, that when he hummed a tune his voice was so touching as to move one to tears.

"Not a day passes," he wrote to Moore, "that I don't think and speak of you. You cannot doubt my

* Lord Holland's youngest son, in speaking of Byron, styled him "the gentleman with the beautiful voice."

sincere admiration, waving personal friendship for the present. I have you by rote and by heart, of which *ecce signum.*"

He then goes on to tell him his adventure when at Lady O——'s :—

"I have a habit of uttering, to what I think tunes, your 'Oh, breathe not,' and others; they are my matins and vespers. I did not intend them to be overheard, but one morning in comes not la Donna, but il Marita, with a very grave face, and said, 'Byron, I must request you not to sing any more, at least of those songs.'—'Why?'—'They make my wife cry, and so melancholy that I wish her to hear no more of them.'

"Now, my dear Moore, the effect must have been from your words, and certainly not my music."

To give Moore the benefit of effecting a great success with an Oriental poem, Byron gave up his own idea of writing one, and sent him some Turkish books.

"I have been thinking of a story," says he, "grafted on the amours of a Peri and a mortal, something like Cayotte's 'Diable Amoureux.' Tenderness is not my *forte*; for that reason I have given up the idea, but I think it a subject you might make much of."

Moore actually wished to write a poem on an Oriental subject, but dreaded such a rival as Byron, and expressed his fears in writing to him. Byron replied :—

"Your Peri, my dear Moore, is sacred and inviolable. I have no idea of touching the hem of her petticoat. Your affectation of a dislike to encounter me is so

flattering that I begin to think myself a very fine fellow. But it really puts me out of humour to hear you talk thus."

Not only did Byron encourage Moore in his task, but effaced himself completely in order to make room for him.

When he published the 'Bride of Abydos,' Moore remarked that there existed some connection in that poem with an incident he had to introduce in his own poem of 'Lalla Rookh.' He wrote thereupon to Byron to say that he would stop his own work, because to aspire after him to describe the energy of passion would be the work of a Cæsar.

Byron replied :—

"I see in you what I never saw in poet before, a strange diffidence of your own powers, which I cannot account for, and which must be unaccountable when a Cossack like me can appal a cuirassier.

"Go on—I shall really be very unhappy if I at all interfere with you. The success of mine is yet problematical . . . Come out, screw your courage to the sticking-place—no man stands higher, whatever you may think on a rainy day in your provincial retreat."

To Moore he dedicated his 'Corsair,' and to read the preface is to see how sincerely attached Byron was to his friend.

When at Venice he heard of some domestic affliction which had befallen Moore; he wrote to him with that admirable simplicity of style which cannot be imitated, because the true accents of the heart defy imitation.

"Your domestic afflictions distress me sincerely;

and, as far as you are concerned, my feelings will always reach the furthest limits to which I may still venture. Throughout life your losses shall be mine, your gains mine also, and, however much I may lose in sensibility, there will always remain a drop of it for you."

When Moore obtained his greatest success, and arrived at the summit of popularity, by the publication of 'Lalla Rookh,' Byron's pleasure was equal to the encouragements he had given him. But of his noble soul, in which no feeling of jealousy could enter, we shall speak elsewhere. Here, in conclusion, I must add that his friendship for Moore remained stanch through time and circumstances, and even notwithstanding Moore's wrongs towards him, of which I shall speak in another chapter.

In treating of Byron's friendships, I have endeavoured to set forth the wrongs which some of his friends, and Moore in particular, have committed against him both before and after his death.

If, as Moore observes, it be true that Byron never lost a friend, was their friendship a like friendship with his own? Has it ever gone so far as to make sacrifices for his sake, and has not Lord Byron ever given more as a friend than he ever received in return? Had he found in his friendship among men that reciprocity of feeling which he ever found among women, would so many injuries and calumnies have been heaped upon his head? Would not his friends, had they shown a little more warmth of affection, have been able to silence those numerous rivals who rendered his life a burden to him? Had they been conscientious in their opinions, they would certainly

not have drawn upon them the rather bitter lines in 'Childe Harold:'—

"I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things, hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing; I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve,
That two, or one, are almost what they seem,
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream."

And later, in 'Don Juan,' Byron would not have said with a smile, but also with a pain which sprang from the heart:—

"O Job! you had two friends: one's quite enough,
Especially when we are ill at ease;
They are but bad pilots when the weather's rough,
Doctors less famous for their cures than fees.

Let no man grumble when his friends fall off,
As they will do like leaves at the first breeze;
When your affairs come round, one way or t'other,
Go to the coffee-house and take another."

It is, however, also true that he would not have had the opportunity of showing us so perfectly the beauty of his mind, and his admirable constancy, notwithstanding the conduct of those on whom he had bestowed his friendship. This constancy is shown even by his own words, for immediately after the lines quoted above, he adds:—

"But this is not my maxim; had it been,
Some heart-aches had been spared me."

CHAPTER VII.

LORD BYRON CONSIDERED AS A FATHER, AS A BROTHER, AND AS A SON.

HIS GOODNESS SHOWN BY THE STRENGTH OF HIS INSTINCTIVE AFFECTIONS.

LORD BYRON AS A FATHER.

IF, as a great moralist has said, our natural affections have power only upon sensitive and virtuous natures, but are despised by men of corrupt and dissipated habits, then must we find a proof again of Lord Byron's excellence in the influence which his affections exercised over him.

His tenderness for his child, and for his sister, was like a ray of sunshine which lit up his whole heart, and in the moments of greatest depression prevented desolation from completely absorbing his nature.

His thoughts were never far from the objects of his affection.

CXV.

"My daughter! with thy name this song begun;
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end;
I see thee not, I hear thee not, but none
Can be so wrapt in thee; thou art the friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never shouldst behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
And reach into thy heart, when mine is cold,
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

CXVI.

"To aid thy mind's development, to watch
Thy dawn of little joys, to sit and see
Almost thy very growth, to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects,—wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,
This, it should seem, was not reserved for me,
Yet this was in my nature: as it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

CXVIII.

* * * * * *

"Sweet be thy cradled slumbers! O'er the sea
And from the mountains where I now respire,
Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,
As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me."

Who ever read 'Childe Harold' and was not touched by the delightful stanzas of the third canto, —a perfect *chef-d'œuvre* of tenderness and kindness, enclosed, as it were, in another masterpiece, like, were it possible, a jewel found in a diamond?

Those only, however, who lived with him in Greece and in Italy are able to bear witness to his paternal tenderness. This sentiment really developed itself on his leaving England, and only appears from that time forward in his poems. Byron loved all children, but his heart beat really when he met children of Ada's age.

Hearing at Venice that Moore had lost a child, he wrote to him, "I enter fully into your misery, for I feel myself entirely absorbed in my children. I have such tenderness for my little Ada."

Both at Ravenna and at Pisa he was miserable if he did not hear from Ada. Whenever he received any portraits of her or a piece of her hair, these were solemn days of rejoicing for him, but they usually

increased his melancholy. When in Greece he heard of Ada's illness, he was seized with such anxiety that he could no longer give his attention to anything. "His journal (which, by-the-bye, was lost or destroyed after his death) was interrupted on account of the news of his child's illness," says Count Gamba, in his narrative of Byron's last voyage to Greece.

The thought of his child was ever present to him when he wrote, and she was the centre of all his hopes and his fears.

The persecution to which he was subjected for having written 'Don Juan,' having made him fear one day at Pisa that its effect upon his daughter might be to diminish her affection for him, he said:—

"I am so jealous of my daughter's entire sympathy, that, were this work, 'Don Juan'—(written to while away hours of pain and sorrow),—to diminish her affection for me, I would never write a word more; and would to God I had not written a word of it!"

He likewise said that he was often wont to think of the time when his daughter would know her father by his works. "Then," said he, "shall I triumph, and the tears which my daughter will then shed, together with the knowledge that she will share the feelings with which the various allusions to herself and me have been written, will console me in my darkest hours. Ada's mother may have enjoyed the smiles of her youth and childhood, but the tears of her maturer age will be for me."

He distinctly foresaw that his daughter would be brought up to look indifferently upon her father; but he never could have believed that such means

would be adopted, as were used, to alienate from him the heart of his own child. We will give one instance only, mentioned by Colonel Wildman, the companion and friend of Byron, who had bought Newstead, of which he took the most religious care. Having in London made the acquaintance of Ada, then Lady Lovelace, the Colonel invited her to pay a visit to the late residence of her illustrious father, and she went to see it sixteen months before Byron's death. As Lady Lovelace was looking over the library one morning, the Colonel took a book of poems and read out a poem with all the force of the soul and heart. Lady Lovelace, in rapture with this poem, asked the name of its writer. "There he is," said the Colonel, pointing to a portrait of Byron, painted by Phillips, which hung over the wall, and he accompanied his gesture by certain remarks which showed what he felt at the ignorance of the daughter. Lady Lovelace remained stupified, and, from that moment, a kind of revolution took place in her feelings towards her father. "Do not think, Colonel," she said, "that it is affectation in me to declare that I have been brought up in complete ignorance of all that concerned my father."

Never had Lady Lovelace seen even the writing of her father; and it was Murray who showed it to her for the first time.

From that moment an enthusiasm for her father filled her whole soul. She shut herself up for hours in the rooms which he had inhabited, and which were still filled with the things which he had used. Here she devoted herself to her favourite studies. She chose to sleep in the apartments which were

most particularly hallowed by the reminiscences of her father, and appeared never to have been happier than during this stay at Newstead, absorbed as she had become for the first time in all the glory of him whose tenderness for her had been so carefully concealed from her. From that time all appeared insipid and tasteless to her; existence became a pain. Everything told her of her father's renown, and nothing could replace it. All these feelings so possessed her that she fell ill, and when she was on the point of death she wrote to Colonel Wildman to beg that she might be buried next to her illustrious father. There, in the modest village church of Hucknell, lie the father and the daughter, who, separated from one another during their lifetime, became united in death, and thus were realized, in a truly prophetic way, the words which close the admirable third canto of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.' Words of consolation for those who loved Byron, and whom religion and philosophy inspire with hope; for they think that, despite his enemies, this union of their mortal remains must be the symbol of their union above, and that the prophetic sense of the words pronounced in the agony of despair will be realised by an eternal happiness.

CXVII.

"Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me; though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation, and a broken claim:
Though the grave closed between us,—'t were the same,
I know that thou wilt love me; though to drain
My blood from out thy being were an aim
And an attainment,—all would be in vain,—
Still thou would'st love me, still that more than life retain."

LORD BYRON AS A BROTHER.

Fraternal love was no less conspicuous in him than his paternal affection. It may be easily conceived how great must have been the influence over one who cared so much for friends in general, of that affection which is the perfection of love, and, at the same time, the most delicate, peaceful, and charming of sentiments. Such a love has neither misunderstandings to dread, nor misrepresentations to fear. It is above the caprices, ennui, and changes which often rule the friendships of our choice.

From his return from his first travels in the East, to the time of his publishing the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold,' Byron may be said not to have known his sister. The daughter of another mother, and older by several years than himself,— living as she did with relations of her mother, brought up as she was by her grandmother, Lady Carmarthen, and married as she had been at an early age to the Hon. Colonel Leigh, Lord Byron had had very few opportunities of seeing her. It was only on his return from the East that he began to have some correspondence with her, on the occasion of his publication of 'Childe Harold.' Notwithstanding all these circumstances, which might tend to lessen in him his love for his sister, his affection for her on the contrary increased.

The reader has observed that about this time, under the pressure of repeated sorrows, a shade of misanthropy had spread itself over his character, notwithstanding that such a failing was totally contrary to his nature. The acquaintance with his sister

helped greatly to dispel this veil, and, thanks to it, he was able to get rid of the first sorrowful impressions of youth.

His dear Augusta became the confidant of his heart; and his pen on the one hand, and his sister on the other, were the means of curing him of all ills. Her influence over him is shown by the love expressed for her in his letters and his notes at that time, and her prudent advice often puts to flight the more unruly dictates of his imagination. Thus, on one occasion, Mrs. Musters (Miss Chaworth) wrote to ask Byron to come and see her. She was miserable that she had preferred her husband to the handsome young man now the celebrated Byron. Byron is tempted to go and see her; he loved her so dearly when a boy. But Augusta thought it dangerous that he should go and see her, and Byron does not.

"Augusta wishes that I should be reconciled with Lord Carlisle," he says. "I have refused this to every body, but I cannot to my sister. I shall, therefore, have to do it, though I had as lief 'Drink up Esil,' or 'eat a crocodile.'"

"We will see. Ward, the Hollands, the Lambs, Rogers, every one has, more or less, tried to settle these matters during the past two years, but unsuccessfully; if Augusta succeeds it will be odd, and I shall laugh."

To refuse his sister anything was out of the question. He loved her so much that the least likeness to her in any woman was enough to attract his sympathy. If ill, he would not have his sister know it; if she was unwell, he cannot rest until he received better accounts of her health. Nothing, however,

shows better his love for her than the lines with which she inspired him at the time of his deepest distress; that is, on leaving England for Switzerland.* I cannot transcribe them altogether, but I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of quoting some extracts from them.

I.

"When all around grew drear and dark,
And reason half withheld her ray—
And hope but shed a dying spark,
Which more misled my lonely way,

* * * * *

Thou wert the solitary star
Which rose and set not to the last."

IV.

"Oh! blest be thine unbroken light!
That watch'd me as a seraph's eye,
And stood between me and the night,
For ever shining sweetly nigh.

VI.

"Still may thy spirit dwell on mine,
And teach it what to brave or brook;
There 's more in one soft word of thine
Than in the world's defied rebuke."

Again,

"Though human, thou did'st not deceive me,
Though woman, thou did'st not forsake,
Though loved, though forborest to grieve me,
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake,
Though trusted, thou did'st not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, 't was not to defame me,
Nor, mute, that the world might belie."

* * * * *

"From the wreck of the past, which hath perish'd,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that what I most cherish d
Deserved to be dearest of all."

This deep fraternal affection, assumed at times under the influence of his powerful genius, and

under exceptional circumstances an almost too passionate expression, which opened a fresh field to his enemies. But it was to him a consolation and a benefit, which did him good throughout his short career; and even at the times when troubles came pouring down upon him, the love of his sister, though not sufficient to give him courage enough to bear up, still always appeared to him as a hope and an encouragement to do well.

LORD BYRON AS A SON.

The two sentiments of which we have just spoken were so strong and so proved in Lord Byron, that it would be almost useless to speak of them, were it not for the pleasure which there is in recalling them.

But there is another natural affection which, though less manifested, was not less felt by Byron; I mean his filial love.

Many biographers, and Moore at their head, have not, for reasons to which I have alluded in another chapter, been fair to his mother. Besides the motives which seem always to have actuated them in the exaggeration of his faults, and of the smallest particulars of his life, they wished, I believe, to give to their narrative a more amusing character. Moore would seem to say that Byron's childhood was badly directed; but how so? Does he mean that his mother did not justly appreciate the peculiarities of her child's character, or promote the fine dispositions of his nature? But such a discernment in parents is matter of rare occurrence, and can it be said that many known characters have been handled according to the scien-

tific rules here laid down? Those who speak of these fine theories would, we fear, be rather puzzled by their application, were they called to do so.

It is matter of note that Byron was surrounded as a child with the tenderest care. At a very early age he was handed over, by his over-indulgent mother and nurses, to most respectable, intelligent, and devoted masters; and at no time of his youth was either his physical, intellectual, or moral education ever neglected. I may add that Byron's mother was respected, both as a wife and as a mother. She was an heiress belonging to a most ancient Scotch family, and closely allied to the royal house of Stuart, and was the second wife of the youngest son of Admiral Byron,—an unusually handsome man, and father to the poet.

Though this man had been rather spoiled by the world, and had not rendered her life perfectly happy, she loved him passionately, and was most devoted to him. When he died, four years after their marriage, her grief was such that it completely changed her nature.

A widow at twenty-three, she centred in her only child all the depth of her affection, and though her fortune was considerably reduced, she still had enough to render her child's life comfortable, so that his education did not suffer by it. He was scarcely six years of age when he succeeded to the barony of his great uncle, and this circumstance in a young Englishman's life always means increased prosperity. His childhood was, therefore, most decidedly fortunate in many respects. This is all the more certain that Byron, throughout his life, always

spoke of his happy childhood, and that his ideal of human happiness never seems to have been realised except at that time.

But, notwithstanding Moore's exaggerations, and the excessive kindness of his mother, whose whole life was centred in the one thought of amusing her child, it is very likely that Byron's passionate nature may have rendered his relations at home less agreeable than they might have been. However much this may have been the case, it is still more certain that such little family dissensions never produced in his mind the slightest germ of ingratitude towards, or want of care for his mother, and that the recollection of his passionate moments only served to make him acquire by his own efforts that wonderful self-possession for which he was afterwards remarkable.

His filial sentiments betrayed themselves at every period, and in every circumstance of his life. The reader has seen how, at Harrow, by showing the names of their parents written on the wall, he prevented his comrades from setting fire to the school.

On attaining his majority, his first care was to improve the financial condition of his mother, notwithstanding the shattered state of his fortune, and to prepare a suitable apartment for her at Newstead.

When the cruel criticisms of the 'Edinburgh Review' condemned his first steps in the career of literature, his chief care, after the first explosion of his own sorrow, was to allay, as far as he could, the sensitiveness of his mother, who, not having the

same motive or power to summon up a spirit of resistance, was, of course, more helplessly alive to this attack upon his fame, and felt it far more than, after the first burst of indignation, he did himself.

During his first travels to the East his affairs were in a very embarrassed state. But, nevertheless, here are the terms in which he wrote to his mother from Constantinople :—

"If you have occasion for any pecuniary supply, pray use my funds as far as they go, without reserve; and, lest this should not be enough, in my next to Mr. H—— I will direct him to advance any sum you may want."

There is a degree of melancholy in the letter which he wrote to his mother on his return to England. He had received most deplorable accounts of his affairs when at Malta, and he applied the terms apathy and indifference to the sentiments with which he approached his native land. He goes on to say, however, that the word apathy is not to be applied to his mother, as he will show; that he wishes her to be the mistress of Newstead, and to consider him only as the visitor. He brings her presents of all kinds, &c. "That notwithstanding this alienation," adds Moore, "which her own unfortunate temper produced, he should have continued to consult her wishes, and minister to her comforts with such unfailing thoughtfulness (as is evinced not only in the frequency of his letters, but in the almost exclusive appropriation of Newstead to her use), redounds in no ordinary degree to his honour."

This want of affection never existed but in the minds of some of Byron's biographers. Lord Byron

knew that his mother doted upon him, and that she watched his growing fame with feverish anxiety.

His successes were passionately looked forward to by her. She had collected in one volume all the articles which had appeared upon his first poems and satires, and had written her own remarks in the margin, which showed that she was possessed of great good sense and considerable talent. Could, then, such a heart as Lord Byron's be ungrateful, and not love such a mother? Mr. Galt, a biographer of Byron's, who is certainly not to be suspected of partiality, renders him, however, full justice in regard to his filial devotion during the life of his mother, and to the deep distress which he felt at her death.

"In the mean time, while busily engaged in his literary projects with Mr. Dallas, and in law affairs with his agent, he was suddenly summoned to Newstead by the state of his mother's health. Before he reached the Abbey she had breathed her last. The event deeply affected him. Notwithstanding her violent temper, her affection for him had been so fond and ardent that he undoubtedly returned it with unaffected sincerity; and, from many casual and incidental expressions which I have heard him employ concerning her, I am persuaded that his filial love was not at any time even of an ordinary kind."

On the night after his arrival at the Abbey, the waiting-woman of Mrs. Byron, in passing the door of the room where the corpse lay, heard the sound of some one sighing heavily within, and, on entering, found his lordship sitting in the dark beside the bed. She remonstrated, when he burst into tears, and exclaimed, "I had but one friend in the world,

and she is gone!" This same filial devotion often inspired him with beautiful lines, such as those in the third canto of 'Childe Harold,' when standing before the tomb of Julia Alpinula, he exclaims :—

LXVI.

"And there—oh! sweet and sacred be the name!—
Julia—the daughter, the devoted—gave
Her youth to Heaven; her heart, beneath a claim
Nearest to Heaven's, broke o'er a father's grave.
Justice is sworn 'gainst tears, and hers would crave
The life she lived in; but the Judge was just,
And then she died on him she could not save.
Their tomb was simple, and without a bust,
And held within their urn one mind, one heart, one dust.

LXVII.

"But these are deeds which should not pass away,
And names that must not wither, though the earth
Forgets her empires with a just decay,
The enslavers and the enslaved, their death and birth;
The high, the mountain-majesty of worth
Should be, and shall, survivor of its woe,
And from its immortality look forth
In the sun's face, like yonder Alpine snow,
Imperishably pure beyond all things below."

As a note to the above, Byron writes :—

"Julia Alpinula, a young Aventian priestess, died soon after a vain attempt to save her father, condemned to death as a traitor by Aulus Cœcina. Her epitaph was discovered many years ago; it is thus :—

JULIA ALPINULA :
HIC JACEO.
INFELICIS PATRIS, INFELIX PROLES.
DEÆ AVENTIÆ SACERDOS.
EXORARE PATRIS NECEM NON POTUI :
MALE MORI IN FATIS ILLE ERAT.
VIXI ANNOS XXIII.

"I know," adds Byron, "of no human composition

so affecting as this, nor a history of deeper interest. These are the names and actions which ought not to perish, and to which we turn with a true and healthy tenderness."

His father having died in 1793, when Byron was only four years of age, he could not know him; but to show how keen were his sentiments towards his memory, I must transcribe a note of Murray's after the following lines in 'Hours of Idleness:'—

> "Stern Death forbade my orphan youth to share
> The tender guidance of a father's care;
> Can rank, or e'en a guardian's name supply
> The love which glistens in a father's eye?"

"In all the biographies which have yet been published of Byron," remarks Murray, "undue severity has been the light by which the character of Byron's father has been judged. Like his son, he was unfortunately brought up by a mother only. Admiral Byron, his father, being compelled by his duties to live away from his family, the son was brought up in a French military academy, which was not likely at that time to do his morals much good. He passed from school into the Coldstream Guards, where he was launched into every species of temptation imaginable, and likely to present themselves to a young man of singular beauty, and heir to a fine name, in the metropolis of England."

The unfortunate intrigue, of which so much has been said, as if it had compromised his reputation as a man of honour, took place when he was just of age, and he died in France at the age of thirty-five. One can hardly understand why the biographers of Byron have insisted upon depreciating the personal quali-

ties of his father, apart from the positively injurious and wicked assertions made against him in memoirs of Lord Byron's life, and in reviews of such memoirs.

Some severe reflections of this kind having found their way into the preface to a French translation of Byron's works, which appeared shortly before the latter's departure for Greece, called for an expostulation by the son himself on behalf of his father, in a letter addressed to Mr. Coulmann, who had been charged to offer to the poet the homage of the French literary men of the day. This letter is interesting in more than one particular, as it re-establishes in their true light several facts wrongly stated with regard to Byron's family, and because it is, perhaps, the last letter which Byron wrote from Italy. It is quoted *in extenso* in the chapter entitled, "Byron's Life in Italy."* I can only repeat here the words which apply more particularly to his father :—

"The author of the essay (M. Pichot) has cruelly calumniated my father. Far from being brutal, he was, according to the testimony of all those who knew him, extremely amiable, and of a lively character, though careless and dissipated. He had the reputation of being a good officer, and had proved himself such in America. The facts themselves belie the assertion. It is not by brutal means that a young officer seduces and elopes with a marchioness, and then marries two heiresses in succession. It is true that he was young, and very handsome, which is a great point.

* This chapter is to be published separately, at no very distant period, by the Author (*note of the Translator*).

"His first wife, Lady Conyers, Marchioness of Carmarthen, did not die of a broken heart, but of an illness which she contracted because she insisted on following my father out hunting before she had completely recovered from her confinement, immediately after the birth of my sister Augusta. His second wife, my mother, who claims every respect, had, I assure you, far too proud a nature ever to stand ill-treatment from anybody, and would have proved it had it been the case. I must add, that my father lived a long time in Paris, where he saw a great deal of the Maréchal de Biron, the commander of the French Guards, who, from the similarity of our names, and of our Norman extraction, believed himself to be our cousin. My father died at thirty-seven years of age, and whatever faults he may have had, cruelty was not one of them. If the essay were to be circulated in England, I am sure that the part relating to my father would pain my sister Augusta even more than myself, and she does not deserve it; for there is not a more angelic being on earth. Both Augusta and I have always cherished the memory of our father as much as we cherished one another,—a proof, at least, that we had no recollection of any harsh treatment on his part. If he dissipated his fortune, that concerns us, since we are his heirs; but until we reproach him with the fact, I know of no one who has a right to do so.

"BYRON."

From all that has been said it will be seen that Byron's sensitive heart was eminently adapted to family affections. Affection alone made him happy,

and his nature craved for it. He was often rather influenced by passion than a seeker of its pleasures, and whenever he found relief in the satisfaction of his passions, it was only because there was real affection at the bottom,—an affection which tended to give him those pleasures of intimacy in which he delighted.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUALITIES OF LORD BYRON'S HEART.

GRATITUDE,—that honesty of the soul which is even greater than social honesty, since it is regulated by no express law, and that most uncommon virtue, since it proscribes selfishness, — was pre-eminently conspicuous in Lord Byron.

To forget a kindness done, a service rendered, or a good-natured proceeding, was for him an impossibility. The memories of his heart were even more astonishing than those of his mind.

His affection for his nurses, for his masters, for all those who had taken care of him when a boy, is well known; and how great was his gratitude for all that Doctor Drury had done for him! His early poems are full of it. His grateful affection for Drury he felt until his last hour.

This quality was so strong in him, that it not only permitted him to forget all past offences, but even rendered him blind to any fresh wrongs. It sufficed to have been kind to him once, to claim his indulgence. The reader remembers that Jeffrey had been the most cruel of the persecutors of his early poems, but that later he had shown more impartiality. This act of justice appeared to Byron a generous act, and one sufficient for him in return to forget all the harm done to him in the past. We accordingly find in his memoranda of 1814 :—

"It does honour to the editor (Jeffrey), because he once abused me: many a man will retract praise; none but a high-spirited mind will revoke its censure, or *can* praise the man it has once attacked."

Yet Jeffrey, who was eminently a critic, gave fresh causes of displeasure to Byron at a later period, and then it was that he forgot the present on recalling the past.

In speaking of this Scotch critic, he considered himself quite disarmed. When at Venice, he heard that he had been attacked about Coleridge in the 'Edinburgh Review,' he wrote as follows to Murray:—

"The article in the 'Edinburgh Review' on Coleridge, I have not seen; but whether I am attacked in it or not, or in any other of the same journal, I shall never think ill of Mr. Jeffrey on that account, nor forget that his conduct towards me has been certainly most handsome during the last four or more years." *

And instead of complaining of this attack, he laughed at it with Moore:—

"The 'Edinburgh Review' had attacked me . . . Et tu, Jeffrey! 'there is nothing but roguery in villanous man.' But I absolve him of all attacks, present and future; for I think he had already pushed his clemency in my behoof to the utmost, and I shall always think well of him. I only wonder he did not begin before, as my domestic destruction was a fine opening for all who wished to avail themselves of the opportunity." †

His great sympathy for Walter Scott became quite enthusiastic, owing also to a feeling of gratitude for a

* Moore, Letter 261. † Venice, 1817.

service rendered to him by Scott. Shortly after his arrival in Italy, and the publication of the third canto of 'Childe Harold,' public opinion in England went completely against him, and an article appeared in the 'Quarterly Review,' by an anonymous pen, in his defence. Byron was so touched by this, that he endeavoured to find out the name of its writer.

"I cannot," he said to Murray, "express myself better than in the words of my sister Augusta, who (speaking of it) says, 'that it is written in a spirit of the most feeling and kind nature.' It is, however, something more: it seems to me (as far as the subject of it may be permitted to judge) to be very well written as a composition, and I think will do the journal no discredit; because, even those who condemn its partiality, must praise its generosity. The temptations to take another and a less favourable view of the question have been so great and numerous, that what with public opinion, politics, &c., he must be a gallant as well as a good man, who has ventured in that place, and at this time, to write such an article even anonymously.

"Perhaps, some day or other, you will know or tell me the writer's name. Be assured, had the article been a harsh one, I should not have asked it."

He afterwards learnt that the article had been written by Walter Scott, and his sympathy was so increased by his gratitude for the service rendered, that he never after seemed happier than when he could extol Scott's talents and kindness.

Gratitude, which often weighs upon one as a duty, so captivated his soul, that the remembrance of the kindness done to him was wont to turn into an affectionate devotion, which time could not change.

Long after the appearance of the article, he wrote as follows to Scott from Pisa :—

" I owe to you far more than the usual obligations for the courtesies of literature and common friendship, for you went out of your way in 1817 to do me a service, when it required, not merely kindness, but courage to do so ; to have been mentioned by you, in such a manner, would have been a proud memorial at any time, but at such a time, 'when all the world and his wife,' as the proverb goes, were trying to trample upon me, was something still more complimentary to my self-esteem. Had it been a common criticism, however eloquent or panegyrical, I should have felt pleased, undoubtedly, and grateful, but not to the extent which the extraordinary goodheartedness of the whole proceeding must induce in any mind capable of such sensations. The very tardiness of this acknowledgment will, at least, show that I have not forgotten the obligation; and I can assure you, that my sense of it has been out at compound interest during the delay."

Gratitude, with him, was oftentimes a magnifying-glass which he used when he had to appreciate certain merits. No doubt Gifford was a judicious, clear-sighted, and impartial critic, but Byron extolled him as an oracle of good taste, and submitted like a child to his decisions.

Gratitude levelled every social condition in his eyes, as we may see by his correspondence with Murray, where the proud aristocrat considers his publisher on a par with himself. Moore marvelled at this; but Moore forgets that Murray was no ordinary publisher, and that, generous by nature, he made to

Byron on one occasion, in 1815, when the noble poet was in great difficulties, the handsomest offers. Lord Byron refused them; but the act was so noble, that its impression was never effaced from Byron's mind, and modified the nature of their relations.

When he had recovered his fortune, he wrote to Murray from Ravenna:—"I only know of three men who would have raised a finger on my behalf; and one of those is yourself. It was in 1815, when I was not even sure of a five-pound note. I refused your offer, but have preserved the recollection of it, though you may have lost it."

To calculate the degree of gratitude due to a service rendered, would have seemed ingratitude in his eyes. He could create beings who were capable of doling it out in that way, but to apply it to himself was an impossibility.

His predilection for the inhabitants of Epirus, of Albania, and for the Suliotes, is known. This predilection originated in the gratitude which he felt for the care taken of him by two Albanian servants who doted on him, during an illness which he had at Patras at the time when he visited that place for the first time. It was also on the Albanian coast that he was wrecked on one occasion, and where he received that hospitality which he has immortalized in Don Juan.

Byron's predilection for this people even overcame the effects which their ingratitude might have produced, for it is matter of history, how badly the barbarous Suliotes behaved to him at Missolonghi a short time before his death; they who had been so benefited by his kindness to them!

The memory of services done to him was not sus-

ceptible of change, and neither time nor distance could in the least affect it. The moment he had contracted a debt of gratitude, he believed himself obliged to pay interest upon it all his life, even had he discharged his debt. One single anecdote will serve to illustrate the truth of these remarks. On the eve of his last departure from London in 1816, when the cruelty of his enemies, powerfully seconded by the spite of Lady Byron, had succeeded in so perverting facts as to give their calumnies the colour of truth, and to throw upon his conduct as a husband so false a light as to hold him up to universal execration, it required great courage to venture on his defence. Lady Jersey did it. She—who was then quite the mistress of fashion by her beauty, her youth, her rank, her fortune, and her irreproachable conduct—organised a fête in honour of Byron, and invited all that was most distinguished in London to come and wish Byron farewell.

Among those who responded to the noble courage of Lady Jersey was one equally deserving of praise, Miss Mercer, now Lady K——. This conduct of Miss Mercer was all the more creditable that there had been a question of her marriage with Lord Byron, and that Miss Milbank had been preferred to her.

This party gave Byron a great insight into the human heart, and showed him all its beauty and all its baseness. The reflections which it caused him to make, and the frank account he gave of it in his memoirs—(the loss of which can never be too much regretted)—would not have pleased his survivors. This was unquestionably a powerful reason why the memoirs were destroyed. But Byron cared not so

much for the painful portion of this recollection, as he loved to remember the noble conduct of these two ladies.

"How often he spoke to me of Lady Jersey, of her beauty and her goodness," says Madame G——. "As to Miss M——," he said, "she was a woman of elevated ideas, who had shown him more friendship than he deserved."

One of the noblest tributes of gratitude and admiration which can be rendered to a woman was paid by Lord Byron to Miss Mercer. As he was embarking at Dover, Byron turned round to Mr. Scroope Davies, who was with him, and giving him a little parcel which he had forgotten to give her when in London, he added: "Tell her that had I been fortunate enough to marry a woman like her, I should not now be obliged to exile myself from my country."

"If," pursues Arthur Dudley (evidently a name adopted by a very distinguished woman biographer), "the rare instances of devotion which he met in life reconciled him to humanity, with what touching glory used he not to repay it. The last accents of the illustrious fugitive will not be forgotten, and history will preserve through centuries the name of her to whom Byron at such a time could send so flattering a message."

But, as if all this were not enough, he actually consecrated in verse, a short time before his death, the memory of his gratitude to the noble women who had done so much honour to their sex :—

"I 've also seen some female *friends* ('tis odd,
But true—as, if expedient, I could prove),
That faithful were through thick and thin, abroad,
At home, far more than ever yet was Love —

Who did not quit me when Oppression trod
Upon me; whom no scandal could remove;
Who fought, and fight, in absence, too, my battles,
Despite the snake Society's loud rattles."

It was on that occasion that Hobhouse said to Lady Jersey, "Who would not consent to be attacked in this way, to boast such a defence?" To which Lady Jersey might have replied, "But who would not be sufficiently rewarded by such gratitude, preserved in such a heart and immortalised in such verses?"

IMPULSES OF LORD BYRON.

All those who have studied human nature agree that impulses show the natural qualities of the soul. "Beware of your first impulses, they are always true," said a diplomatist, the same who insisted that speech was given us to conceal our thoughts. If such be the case, Lord Byron's goodness of heart is palpable, for all who knew him agree in bearing testimony to the extraordinary goodness of all his impulses. "His lordship," says Parry, "was keenly sensitive at the recital of any case of distress, in the first instance; and advantage being taken of this feeling immediately, he would always relieve it when in his power. If this passion, however, was allowed to cool, he was no longer to be excited. This was a fault of Lord Byron's, as he frequently offered, upon the impulse of the moment, assistance which he would not afterwards give, and thereby occasionally compromised his friends."

To multiply quotations would only be to repeat the same proof. I shall therefore merely add that it was often the necessity of modifying the nobility of his

first impulses which made him appear inconstant and changeable.

EFFECTS OF HAPPINESS AND MISFORTUNE UPON BYRON.

"The effect of a great success," writes some one, "is ever bad in bad natures, but does good only to such as are really good in themselves."

As the rays of the sun soften the honey and harden the mud, so the rays of happiness soften a good and tender heart, while they harden a base and egotistical nature. This proof has not been wanting in Byron. His wonderful successes, which laid at his feet the homage of nations, and which might easily have made him vain and proud, only rendered him better, more amiable, and brighter.

"I am happy," said Dallas, on the occasion of the great success which greeted the publication of the first canto of 'Childe Harold,' "to think that his triumph, and the attention which he has attracted, have already produced upon him the soothing effect I had hoped. He was very lively to day."

Moore says the same; and Galt is obliged to grant that, as Byron became the object of public curiosity, his desire to oblige others increased. After giving a personal proof of Byron's goodness to him, he ends by saying:—

"His conversation was then so lively, that gaiety seemed to have passed into habit with him." It was also at that time that he wrote in his memoranda:— "I love Ward, I love A——, I love B——," and then, as if afraid of those numerous sympathies, he adds: "Oh! shall I begin to love the whole world?" This

universal love was only the expression of the want of his soul which had mollified under the rays of that mild sun which is called happiness.

EFFECTS OF MISFORTUNE AND INJUSTICE UPON BYRON.

If his natural goodness had so large a field to develop itself in happiness, it reached a degree of sublimity in misfortune.

That Byron's short life was full of real sorrows, I have shown in another chapter, when I had to prove their reality against those imputations of their being imaginary made by some of his biographers. He required a strength of mind equal to his genius and to his sensibility, to be able to resist the numerous ills with which he was assailed throughout his life:—

> "Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?
> Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?
> Have I not had my brain sear'd, my heart riven,
> Hopes sapp'd, name blighted, Life's life lied away?"

Such beautiful lines speak loudly enough of the intensity of his sufferings. Great as they were, they did not, however, produce in him any feeling of hatred. To forgive was his only revenge; and not only did he forgive, but, the paroxysm of passion over, there was only room in his soul for those nobler feelings of patience, of toleration, of resignation, and of abnegation, of which no one in London can have formed a notion. The storms to which his soul was at times a prey only purified it, and discovered a host of qualities which are kept back often by the more powerful passions of youth. If he never attained that calmness of spirit which is the gift of

those who cannot feel, or perhaps of the saints, he at any rate, at the age of thirty-two, began to feel a contempt of all worldly and frivolous matters, and came to the resolution of forgiving most generously all offences against him.

Shelley, who went to see him at Ravenna, wrote to his wife "that if he had mischievous passions he seemed to have subdued them; and that he was becoming, what he should be,—a *virtuous man*."

Mme. de Bury, in her excellent essay upon Byron, expresses herself thus, "had his natural goodness not been great, the events which compelled him to leave his country, and which followed upon his departure, must have exercised over his mind the effect of drying it up; and, in lessening its power, would have forced him to give full vent to his passions." Instead of producing such a result, they on the contrary purified it, and developed in him the germs of a host of virtues. I shall not tarry any longer, however, on this subject, as in another chapter I intend to consider Byron's kindness of disposition from a far higher point of view. I shall only add his own words, which prove his goodness of character. "I cannot," said he, "bear malice to any one, nor can I go to sleep with an ill thought against anybody."

ABSENCE OF ALL JEALOUS FEELINGS IN LORD BYRON.

Among the infirmities of human nature, one of the most general, serious, and incurable, is certainly that of jealousy. Being the essence of a disordered self-love, it presents several aspects, according to the different social positions of those whom it afflicts, and

the degree of goodness of the people. It might, in my mind, almost be called the thermometer of the heart. But of all the jealousies, that which has done most harm on earth has been the jealousy of artists and of literary men.

This kind of fever has at times risen to a degree inconceivable. It has raged so high as to call poison to its aid, to invoke the help of daggers and create assassins.

But even putting aside these excesses, proper to Southern countries, it is certain that everywhere and at all times jealousy has caused numberless cases of ingratitude, and has set brothers against brothers, friends against friends, and pupils against masters.

Great minds in France have not been altogether free from it. Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, became a prey to its disastrous influences. In England Dryden, Addison, Swift, Shaftesbury, were its victims. So it has been everywhere, and in Italy even Petrarch, the meek and excellent Petrarch, was not exempted from it.

This moral infirmity is of so subtle a nature, that not only does it injure those who are devoted to those works of the mind, which cannot be said to establish a solid claim to glory inasmuch as public opinion is judge, but also those whose influence being confined to a more limited sphere, should be less anxious about obtaining it. It finds so easy an access into the souls of men, that it is said that even Plato was jealous of Socrates, Aristotle of Plato, Leibnitz of Locke, and so forth.

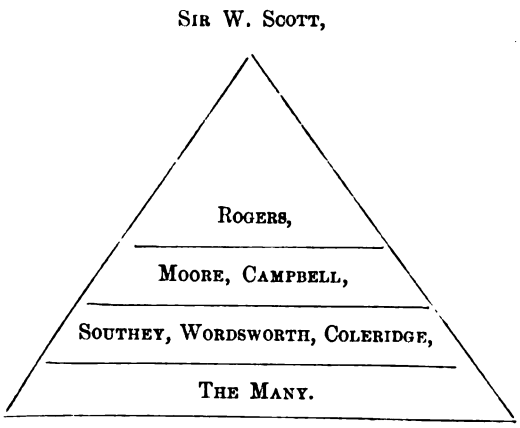
When we behold so many great minds at all times unable to avoid this jealousy, and that we see nowa-

days jealousy animating the pen of some of the best writers, and completely changing their moral sense, must we not admire the great goodness of him whom, though living in such a heated atmosphere of jealous rivalry, contrived wholly to escape its effects?

This right I claim for Lord Byron, that he was the least jealous of any man, as the proofs which I shall bring forward will abundantly attest.

If Byron was jealous of the living, of whom could he have been so? Of course of such who may have become his rivals in the sphere of literature which he had adopted. When Byron appeared in the literary world, those who were most in repute were Sir Walter Scott, Rogers, Moore, Campbell, and the lakers Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and, later, Shelley.

On one occasion, in 1813, Byron amused himself by tracing what he called a "triangular gradus ad Parnassum," in which the names of the principal poets then in renown are thus classified:—



To know best his feelings with respect to his rivals, we must listen to himself; and, to preserve the order given in the triangle, let us begin by Walter Scott. We read in Byron's memorandum of the 17th of September, 1813 :—

"George Ellis and Murray have been talking something about Scott and me, George *pro* Scoto—and very right too. If they want to depose him, I only wish they would not set me up as a competitor. Even if I had my choice, I would rather be the Earl of Warwick than all the kings he ever made! Jeffrey and Gifford I take to be the monarch-makers in poetry and prose. I like Scott—and admire his works to what Mr. Braham calls Entusymusy. All such stuff can only vex him, and do me no good."

And elsewhere: "I have not answered W. Scott's last letter, but I will. I regret to hear from others that he has lately been unfortunate in pecuniary involvements. He is undoubtedly the Monarch of Parnassus, and the most English of bards."

When these expressions were written, Byron did not know Scott personally; but, notwithstanding his satire, of which he had often made a generous retractation, he had always felt a great sympathy for Scott, who, on the other hand, appeared to have forgotten the wound inflicted by Byron's youthful pen, only to remember the latter's heartfelt praises.

A few years after the publication of 'English Bards,' and just after that of 'Childe Harold,' Byron and Sir W. Scott manifested a mutual desire to make each other's acquaintance through the medium of Murray, who was then travelling in Scotland. An exchange of letters full of mutual generosity had

taken place, when George IV., then Regent, expressed the wish to make Byron's acquaintance.

After speaking to him of 'Childe Harold,' in terms which Byron was always proud to recall, the Prince went on to speak of Walter Scott in the most enthusiastic terms. Byron seemed almost as pleased as if the praise had been addressed to himself, and hastened to make his illustrious rival acquainted with the flattering words used by royalty with regard to him.

It was only in the summer of 1815 that they became personally acquainted. Scott was then passing through London on his way to France. Their sympathy was mutual. Byron, who had been married seven months, already foresaw that a storm was brewing in his domestic affairs, which explains the mysterious melancholy, observed by Scott, upon the countenance of his young friend. Scott's liveliness, however, always brought about a return of Byron's spirits, and their meetings were always very gay, "the gayest even," says Scott, "that I ever spent."

Byron's handsomeness produced a great impression upon Scott. "It is a beauty," said he, "which causes one to reflect and to dream;" as if he wished one to understand that he thought Byron's beauty superhuman.

"Report had prepared me to meet a man of peculiar habits and a quick temper, and I had some doubt whether we were likely to suit each other in society. I was most agreeably disappointed in this respect. I found Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, and even kind.

"Like the old heroes in Homer, we exchanged gifts: I gave Byron a beautiful dagger mounted with

gold, which had been the property of the redoubted Elfi Bey. But I was to play the part of Diomed in the Iliad, for Byron sent me, some time after, a large sepulchral vase of silver. It was full of dead men's bones, and had inscriptions on the sides of the base. One ran thus :— "The bones contained in this urn were found in certain ancient sepulchres within the land walls of Athens in the month of February, 1811. The other face bears the lines of Juvenal—

'Expende quot libras in duce summo invenies.
Mors sola fatetur quantula hominum corpuscula.'

"A letter," adds W. Scott, "accompanied this vase, which was more valuable to me than the gift itself, from the kindness with which the donor expressed himself towards me. I left it, naturally, in the urn with the bones, but it is now missing. As the theft was not of a nature to be practised by a mere domestic, I am compelled to suspect the inhospitality of some individual of higher station,—most gratuitously exercised certainly, since, after what I have here said, no one will probably choose to boast of possessing this literary curiosity."

Their mutual sympathy increased upon improved acquaintance with one another. When at Venice Byron was informed that Scott was ill : he said that he would not for all the world have him ill. "I suppose it is from sympathy that I have suffered from fever at the same time." At Ravenna a little later, on the 12th of January, 1821, he wrote down in his memoranda :—

"Scott is certainly the most wonderful writer of the day. His novels are a new literature in themselves, and his poetry as good as any, if not better (only on an erroneous system), and only ceased to be

so popular, because the vulgar learned were tired of hearing Aristides called the Just, and Scott the Best, and ostracised them.

"I like him, too, for his manliness of character, for the extreme pleasantness of his conversation, and his good nature towards myself personally. May he prosper! for he deserves it.

"I know no reading to which I fall with such alacrity as a work of W. Scott's. I shall give the seal with his bust on it to Mlle. la Comtesse Guiccioli this evening, who will be curious to have the effigies of a man so celebrated."

He did take the seal to the Countess Guiccioli, and she said that Byron's expressions about Scott were always most affectionate. "How I wish you knew him!" he often repeated.

He used to say that it was not the poetry of 'Childe Harold,' but Scott's own superior prose that had done his poetry harm, and that if ever the public could by chance get tired of his novels, Scott might write in verse with equal success. He insisted that Scott had a dramatic talent, "talent," he said, "which people are loth to grant me." He said that the success of Scott's novels was not in the least due to the anonymous character he had adopted, and that he could not understand why he would not sign his name to works of such merit. He likewise asserted that of all the authors of his period, Scott was the least jealous. "He is too sure of his fame to fear any rivals, nor does he think of good works as Tuscans do of fever; that there is only a certain amount of it in the world, and that in communicating it to others, one gets rid of it."

"I never travel without taking Scott's novels with me," said Byron to Medwin, at Pisa; "it is a real library, a literary treasure; I can read them yearly with renewed pleasure."

A few days before his departure for Greece, he learnt that M. Stendhall had published an article upon Racine and Shakspeare, wherein there were some unfavourable remarks about Walter Scott.

Notwithstanding his occupations preparatory to departure, he found time to write to Stendhall, and tell him how much he felt the injustice of these remarks, and to request that they should be rectified.

This letter of Byron's to M. Beyle will no doubt be read with universal admiration, as it points out most prominently all the goodness of his character:—

"SIR,—Now that I know to whom I am indebted for a very flattering mention in the 'Rome, Naples, and Florence, in 1817,' by Monsieur Stendhall, it is fit that I should return my thanks (however undesired or undesirable) to Monsieur Beyle, with whom I had the honour of being acquainted at Milan in 1816.* You only did me too much honour in what you were pleased to say in that work, but it has hardly given me less pleasure than the praise itself, to become at length aware (which I have done by mère accident) that I am indebted for it to one of whose good opinion I was really ambitious. So many changes have taken place since that period in the Milan circle, that I hardly dare recur to it—some dead, some banished, and some in the Austrian dun-

* Why has the passage in the first edition of Stendhall's works, which treats in enthusiastic terms of Byron's genius, been cut out of the subsequent editions?

geons. Poor Pelico! I trust that in his iron solitude his muse is consoling him in some measure, one day to delight us again, when both she and her poet are restored to freedom.

"There is one part of your observations in the pamphlet, which I shall venture to remark upon: it regards Walter Scott. You say that 'his character is little worthy of enthusiasm, at the same time that you mention his productions in the manner they deserve. I have known Walter Scott long and well, and in occasional situations which call forth the real character, and I can assure you that his character *is* worthy of admiration; that of all men, he is the most open, the most honourable, the most amiable," &c.

"BYRON."

Even at Missolonghi, where certainly literary thoughts were little in harmony with his occupations, Byron found occasion to speak of his sentiments as regards Scott, since even the simple and anti-poetic Parry tells us, in his interesting narrative of 'The Last Days of Lord Byron,' of the admiration and affection with which Byron always spoke of Walter Scott. "He never wearied of his praise of 'Waverley,' and continually quoted passages from it."

May we be allowed to observe, in conclusion, that such a generous desire on the part of Byron constantly to put forward the merits of Scott deserved from the latter a warmer acknowledgment. The homage paid to his memory by Scott came late, and is cold. Be it from a Tory or Protestant spirit, Scott in his eulogy of Lord Byron did not disclaim openly the calumnies uttered against the great poet's fame, but almost sided with his hypocritical apologists, by

assuming a kind of tone of indulgence in speaking of him.

ROGERS.

Rogers comes next in the triangular order.

Byron's esteem for Rogers was such, that not only did he spare him in his famous satire, but even addressed him a real compliment in the lines:—

> "And thou, melodious Rogers! rise at last,
> Recall the pleasing memory of the past;
> Arise! let blest remembrance still inspire,
> And strike to wonted tones thy hallow'd lyre;
> Restore Apollo to his vacant throne,
> Assert thy country's honour and thine own."

He equally declared that, after the 'Essay on Man' of Pope, the 'Pleasures of Memory' constituted the finest English didactic poem. This opinion he maintained always.

"I have read again the 'Pleasures of Memory,'" he wrote in September, 1813. "The elegance of this poem is quite marvellous. Not a vulgar line throughout the whole book."

About the same time he read, in the 'Edinburgh Review,' an eulogy of Rogers. "He is placed very high," he exclaimed, "but not higher than he has a right to be. There is a summary review of everybody. Moore and I included: we are both—he justly—praised; but both very justly ranked under Rogers.

At another time he wrote in his memoranda:—

"When he does talk (Rogers), on all subjects of taste, his delicacy of expression is as pure as his poetry. If you enter his house, his drawing-room, his library, you involuntarily say, 'This is not the dwelling of a common mind.' There is not a gem, a coin, a book,

thrown aside on his chimney-piece, his sofa, his table, that does not bespeak an almost fastidious elegance in the possessor. But this very delicacy must be the misery of his existence. Oh! the jarrings this disposition must have encountered through life!"

On one occasion he borrows one of Rogers' ideas, to write upon it the 'Bride of Abydos;' and in confessing that the 'Pleasures of Memory' have suggested his theme, he adds in a note, that "it is useless to say that the idea is taken from a poem so well known, and to which one has such pleasurable recourse."

To Rogers he dedicates the 'Giaour,' a slight but sincere token of admiration.

When Rogers sent him 'Jacqueline,' Byron replied that he could not receive a more acceptable gift. "It is grace, delicacy, poetry itself." What astonishes him is that Rogers should not be tempted to write oftener such charming poetry. He sympathized with that kind of soft affection, though he would say that he lacked the talent to express it.

From Venice he wrote to Moore, "I hope Rogers is flourishing. He is the Titan of poetry, already immortal. You and I must wait to become so."

At Pisa he took the part of Rogers against his detractors in the warmest manner. Not only did the 'Pleasures of Memory' always enchant him, not only did he insist that the work was immortal, but added that Rogers was kind and good to him. And as people persisted in blaming Rogers for being jealous and susceptible, which Byron knew from experience to be so, he replied, that "these things are, as Lord Kenyon said of Erskine, little spots in the sun.

Rogers has qualities which outweigh the little weaknesses of his character."

MOORE.

Moore is third in the order of the triangle. We have seen Byron's sentiments and conduct with regard to this friend. It remains for us to note the feelings of the author for another very popular writer, who was in many respects a worthy rival.

Byron had often recommended Moore to write other poetry than melodies, and to apply his talent to a work of more serious importance. When he learnt that he was writing an Oriental poem he was charmed.

"It may be, and would appear to a third person," he wrote to him, "an incredible thing; but I know *you* will believe me, when I say that I am as anxious for your success as one human being can be for another's—as much as if I had never scribbled a line. Surely the field of fame is wide enough for all; and if it were not, I would not willingly rob my neighbour of a rood of it."

And he goes on to praise Moore and to depreciate himself, as was his custom.

After two years' intimacy he dedicated the 'Corsair' to Moore, and, in speaking of it to him, he adds:—

"If I can but testify to you and the world how truly I admire and esteem you, I shall be quite satisfied."

And, in dedicating his work to him, he expresses himself thus:—

"My praise could add nothing to your well-earned and firmly established fame, and with my most

hearty admiration of your talents, and delight in your conversation, you are already acquainted."

I have already said that he almost wished to be eclipsed, that Moore might shine the more prominently.

"The best way to make the public 'forget' me is to remind them of yourself. You cannot suppose that I would ask you or advise you to publish, if I thought you would *fail*. I really have no literary envy; and I do not believe a friend's success ever sat nearer another's heart, than yours does to the wishes of mine. It is for *elderly gentlemen* to 'bear no brother near,' and cannot become our disease for more years than we may perhaps number. I wish you to be out before Eastern subjects are again before the public."

He meanwhile got Murray to use his influence to point out to Moore the best time for appearing.

"I need not say, that I have his success much at heart; not only because he is my friend, but something much better—a man of great talent, of which he is less sensible than, I believe, any even of his enemies. If you can so far oblige me as to step down, do so," &c.

Lord Byron had never ceased to press Moore to publish his poem. When it appeared, he wrote to him from Venice:—

"I am glad that we are to have it at last. Really and truly, I want you to make a great hit, if only out of self-love, because we happen to be old cronies; and I have no doubt you will—I am sure you *can*. But you are, I'll be sworn, in a devil of a pucker, and I am not at your elbow, and Rogers *is*. I envy him;

which is not fair, because he does *not envy anybody*.* Mind you send to me—that is, make Murray send—the moment you are forth."

"I feel as anxious for Moore as I could do for myself, for the soul of me; and I would not have him succeed otherwise than splendidly, which I trust he will do."

And then, writing again to Murray, from Venice (June, 1817):—

"It gives me great pleasure to hear of Moore's success, and the more so that I never doubted that it would be complete. Whatever good you can tell me of him and his poem will be most acceptable; I feel very anxious indeed to receive it. I hope that he is as happy in his fame and reward as I wish him to be; for I know no one who deserves both more, if any so much."

A month later he added:—

"I have got the sketch and extracts from 'Lalla Rookh'—which I humbly suspect will knock up . . . ." (he intended himself), "and show young gentlemen that something more than having been across a camel's hump is necessary to write a good Oriental tale. The plan, as well as the extracts I have seen, please me very much indeed, and I feel impatient for the whole."

And, lastly, after he had received it:—

"I have read 'Lalla Rookh.' . . . . I am very glad to hear of his popularity, for Moore is a very noble fellow, in all respects, and will enjoy it without any of the bad feelings which success,

* Was this a little irony? I think so, for it was believed that jealousy was the weak point of Rogers.

good or evil, sometimes engenders in the men of rhyme.

He wrote to Moore from Ravenna, in a sort of jest, —"I am not quite sure that I shall allow the Miss Byrons to read 'Lalla Rookh,'—in the first place, on account of this sad *passion*, and in the second, that they mayn't discover that there was a better poet than Papa." *

To end these quotations, let us add that, shortly before his death, he said to Medwin:—"Moore is one of the small number of writers, who will survive the century which has appreciated his worth. The Irish Melodies will go to posterity with their music, and the poems and the music will last as long as Ireland, or music or poetry."

CAMPBELL.

Campbell, the author of 'Pleasures of Hope,' and who stands fourth in the triangle, was spared, with Rogers, in the famous satire—

> "Come forth, oh! Campbell, give thy talents scope:
> Who dare aspire, if thou must cease to hope?"

This homage was strengthened by a note, in which Byron called the 'Pleasures of Hope' "one of the finest didactic poems in the English language."

Byron's relations with Campbell were never as intimate as with other poets. Not only because circumstances prevented it, but also in consequence of a fault in Campbell's character, which lessened the sympathy raised by the admiration of his talent and of his worth. This fault consisted in an *excessive* opinion of himself, which prevented his being

* Moore, Letter 435.

just towards his rivals, and bearing patiently with their successes, or the criticisms of his own work.

Coleridge at this time was giving lectures upon poetry, in which he taught a new system of poetry.

"He attacks," says Lord Byron, "the 'Pleasures of Hope,' and all other pleasure whatever . . . . Campbell will be desperately annoyed. I never saw a man (and of him I have seen very little) so sensitive. What a happy temperament! I am sorry for it; what can *he* fear from criticism?"

Lord Byron had just published the 'Bride of Abydos,' when he wrote in his journal, "Campbell last night seemed a little nettled at something or other—I know not what. We were standing in the ante-saloon, when Lord H—— brought out of the other room a vessel of some composition similar to that which is used in Catholic churches for burning incense, and seeing us, he exclaimed, 'Here is some incense for you.' Campbell answered, 'Carry it to Lord Byron; he is used to it.'

"Now this comes of 'bearing no brother near the throne.' I who have no throne am at perfect peace with all the poetical fraternity."

But if this weakness of Campbell lessened Byron's sympathy for him, or rather interfered with his intimacy, it never altered his just appreciation of his merits, or made him less generous to him.

"By-the-bye," writes Byron to Moore, "Campbell has a printed poem which is not yet published, the scene of which is laid in Germany. It is perfectly magnificent, and equal to himself. I wonder why he does not publish it."

Later on, in Italy, when in his reply to Black-

wood, Byron criticises modern poetry, and gives, without sparing anybody, not even himself, his unbiassed opinion about the poets of the day, he says: "We are all on a false track, except Rogers, Campbell, and Crabbe."

And in his memoranda in 1821, at Ravenna, we find the following passage:—

"Read Campbell's 'Poets' . . . . justly celebrated. His defence of Pope is glorious. To be sure, it is his own cause too—but no matter, it is very good, and does him great credit . . . If anything could add to my esteem of this gentleman poet, it would be his classical defence of Pope against the cant of the present day."

On the fifth line of the triangle come the names of Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, commonly called the "Lakers," because they had resided near the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland. He was certainly bitter against these in his satire; but owing simply to their efforts to upset the school of Pope, of which he had made a deep study, and to their endeavours to start an æsthetical school, which he strenuously opposed. As, however, in blaming, he allowed his passion at times to master his opinions and judgments of their merits, he generously made amends and owned his error some years later. He kept to his own notions of poetry and art, but nobly recognized the talent of the Lakers, knowing, however, very well that he would never obtain from them a reciprocity of good feeling.

SOUTHEY.

"Yesterday, at Holland House, I was introduced

to Southey, —the best looking bard I have seen for some time. To have that poet's head and shoulders, I would almost have written his 'Sapphics.' He is certainly a prepossessing person to look on, and a man of talent, and all that—and—there is his eulogy."

"Southey I have not seen much of. His appearance is epic; and he is the only existing entire man of letters. His manners are mild, but not those of a man of the world, and his talents of the first order. His prose is perfect. Of his poetry there are various opinions: there is, perhaps, too much of it for the present generation—posterity will probably select. He has passages equal to anything. At present he has a party, but no public—except for his prose writings. The 'Life of Nelson' is beautiful."

WORDSWORTH.

Underneath some lines of his satire upon Wordsworth, Byron in 1816 wrote in Switzerland the word "unjust!"

He often praised Wordsworth, even at times when the latter had, for reasons which I will mention hereafter, lost all claims to Byron's indulgence. Even in his poem of the 'Island,' written shortly before his departure for Greece, where he was to die, Byron found means of inserting a passage from Wordsworth's poem, which he considered exquisite.

COLERIDGE.

Among the three Lakers, Coleridge was the one to whom he showed the most generous feeling. He was poor, and lived by his pen. Lord Byron,

putting this consideration above all others, wished to assist at his readings, and praised them warmly. Coleridge having asked him on one occasion to interest himself with the director of Drury-lane Theatre (on the Committee of which Byron then stood) the latter did his best to gratify the wishes of Coleridge, and wrote him the most flattering letter, blaming the satire which had been the effect of a youthful ebullition of feeling :—

"P. S. You mention my 'Satire,' lampoon, or whatever you or others please to call it. I can only say that it was written when I was very young and very angry, and has been a thorn in my side ever since; more particularly as almost all the persons animadverted upon became subsequently my acquaintances, and some of them my friends, which is 'heaping fire upon an enemy's head,' and forgiving me too readily to permit me to forgive myself. The part applied to you is pert, and petulant, and shallow enough; but, although I have long done every thing in my power to suppress the circulation of the whole thing, I shall always regret the wantonness or generality of many of its attacks. If Coleridge writes his promised tragedy, Drury Lane will be set up." Though harassed with pecuniary difficulties of all kinds, Byron contrived to help Coleridge, who he had heard was in the greatest distress.

He wrote to Moore :—"By the way, if poor Coleridge—who is a man of wonderful talent, and in distress, and about to publish two volumes of poesy and biography, and who has been worse used by the critics than ever we were—will you, if he comes out, promise me to review him favourably in the E. R.?

Praise him, I think you must; but will you also praise him well,—of all things the most difficult? It will be the making of him.

"This must be a secret between you and me, as Jeffrey might not like such a project: nor, indeed, might he himself like it. But I do think he only wants a pioneer and a spark or two to explode most gloriously."

He sent Murray a MS. tragedy of Coleridge, begging of him to read it and to publish it:—

"When you have been enabled to form an opinion on Mr. Coleridge's MS., you will oblige me by returning it, as, in fact, I have no authority to let it out of my hands. I think most highly of it, and feel anxious that you should be the publisher; but if you are not, I do not despair of finding those who will."

As the reader knows, Byron, while in England, always gave away the produce of his poems. To Coleridge he destined part of the sum offered to him by Murray for 'Parisina' and the 'Siege of Corinth.' Some difficulty, however, having arisen, because Murray refused to pay the 100 guineas to any other than Byron himself, he borrowed it himself to give it to Coleridge.

At the same time Byron paid so noble a tribute to Coleridge's talent, and to his poem of 'Christabel,' by inserting a note on the subject in his preface to the 'Siege of Corinth,' that Coleridge's editor took this note as the epigraph.

"Christabel!—I won't have any one," he said, "sneer at 'Christabel;' it is a fine wild poem."

In 1816 he wrote from Venice to Moore:—

"I hear that the E. R. has cut up Coleridge's

'Christabel,' and declared against me for praising it. I praised it, firstly, because I thought well of it; secondly, because Coleridge was in great distress, and after doing what little I could for him in essentials, I thought that the public avowal of my good opinion might help him further, at least with the booksellers. I am very sorry that J—— has attacked him, because, poor fellow, it will hurt him in mind and pocket. As for me, he's welcome—I shall never think less of Jeffrey for anything he may say against me or mine in future."

At Genoa, he declared, in a memorandum, that Crabbe and Coleridge were pre-eminent in point of power and talent.

At Pisa he blamed those who refused to see in 'Christabel' a work of rare merit, notwithstanding the knowledge which he had of Coleridge's ingratitude to him; and refused to believe that W. Scott did not admire the poem, "for we all owe Coleridge a great deal," said he, "and even Scott himself."

And Medwin adds: "Lord Byron thinks Coleridge's poem very fine. He paraphrased and imitated one passage. He considers the idea excellent, and enters into it."

And speaking of Coleridge's psychological poem he said: "What perfect harmony! 'Kubla Khan' delights me."

SHELLEY.

If Shelley did not find a place in the triangle, it is only because he was not yet known, except by the eccentricities of his conduct as a boy. But so soon as Byron was able to appreciate his genius, he lavished

praises upon the poet and the man, while he blamed his metaphysics.

In all his letters we find proofs of his affectionate regard for Shelley; and during his last days in Greece, he said to Finlay,—"Shelley was really a most extraordinary genius; but those who know him only from his works, know but half his merits: it was from his thoughts and his conversation poor Shelley ought to be judged. He was romance itself in his manners and his style of thinking."

"You were all mistaken," he wrote from Pisa to Murray, "about Shelley, who was, without exception, the best and least selfish man I ever knew."

And when he learnt his death, he wrote to Moore: —"There is thus another man gone, about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken. It will, perhaps, do him justice now, when he can be no better for it."

Such were Byron's expressions in behalf of poets of whose school he disapproved, before the calumnies spread about, and the perfidious provocations of some, joined to the ingratitude and jealousy of others, obliged him to turn his generosity into bitter retaliation. We will speak elsewhere of this epoch in their mutual relations, and we hope to show, if jealousy caused the change, that it sprang from them and not from him.

To praise was almost a besetting sin in Lord Bryon. So amiable a fault was not only committed in favour of his rivals, but also by way of encouragement to young authors. What did he not do to promote the success of M. N. N—— the author of Bertram's dramas, whom Walter Scott had recommended to him?

After reading a tragedy which a young man had submitted to him, Byron wrote in his memoranda :—

"This young man has talent; he has, no doubt, stolen his ideas from another, but I shall not betray him. His critics will be but too prone to proclaim it. I hate to discourage a beginner."

Indulgent to mediocrity, compassionate with the weakness and defects of all, incapable of causing the slightest pain to those who were destitute of talent, even when art required that he should condemn them, his goodness was such, that he almost felt remorse whenever he had been led to criticise a work too severely. He deplored his having dealt too harshly with poor Blackett, as soon as the latter's position became known to him; and also with Keats, whose talent, though great, was raw in many respects, and who had become a follower of the Lakist school, which Byron abhorred.

To praise the humble, however, in order to humble the great, was an action incompatible with his noble character. Great minds constituted his great attractions, and on these he bestowed such praise as could not be deemed too partial or unjust.

Happy in the unqualified praise of Pope, of the classical poets, of the great German and Italian poets, he sometimes made exceptions, and Shakespeare was one. This is not to be wondered at. Lord Byron's mind was as well regulated as it was powerful. His admiration of Pope proves it.

"As to Pope," he writes to Moore from Ravenna, in 1821, "I have always regarded him as the greatest name in our Poetry. Depend upon it, the rest are barbarians. He is a Greek temple, with a Gothic

cathedral on one hand, and a Turkish mosque and all sorts of fantastic pagodas and conventicles about him. You may call Shakespeare and Milton pyramids, if you please; but I prefer the Temple of Theseus, or the Parthenon, to a mountain of burnt brickwork." *

Order and proportion were necessities of his nature, so much so that he condemned his writings whenever they departed from his ideal of the beautiful, the essential constituents of which were order and power.

His admiration, therefore, was entirely centered in classical works. But has not Shakespeare a little disregarded the eternal laws of the beautiful observed by Homer, Pindar, and a host of other poets, ancient and modern?

If Byron, then, did not see in Shakespeare all that perfection which an æsthetical school just sprung from the North attributed to him, was he to be blamed? Has he, on this account, disregarded the great merits of that glorious mind? Even had Byron seen in Shakespeare the founder of a dramatic school, rather than a genius more powerful than orderly, who acted against his will upon certain principles, and who scrutinised the human heart to an almost supernatural depth, was he interdicted from finding fault with that school?

Does Shakespeare so economise both time and mind, as to make the action of his dramas continuous, without fatiguing the mind or weakening the dramatic effect? Are not the unities and the proportions disregarded in his plays? What necessity is there at times to put one piece into another? Are not his

* Moore, Letter 422.

discussions and monologues too long? Does not his own exuberant genius become a fatigue to himself and to his readers? Are not, perhaps, his characters too real? and do they not often degenerate, without motive, from the sublime into the ridiculous? Would Hamlet have appeared less interesting or less mad had he not spoken indelicate and cruel words to Ophelia? Would Laertes have seemed less grieved on hearing of the death of his sister had he not made so unnecessary a play on the words?

Was not Byron, therefore, right when he said, with Pope, that Shakespeare was "the worst of models?" And could he possibly be called jealous, because he added that, "notwithstanding his defects, Shakespeare was still the most extraordinary of men of genius?"

This opinion of Byron was decidedly serious, though his opinions did not always partake of that character. His humour was rather French: he liked to laugh, to joke, to mystify, and astonish people who wished to understand him. He used, then, to employ a particular measure in his praise and his condemnation.

"On one occasion at Missolonghi, and shortly before his death," says Colonel Stanhope, "the drama was mentioned in conversation, and Byron at once attacked Shakespeare by defending the unities. A gentleman present, on hearing his anti-Shakespearian opinions rushed out of the room, and afterwards entered his protest most earnestly against such doctrines. Lord Byron was quite delighted with this, and redoubled the severity of his criticism.

"He said once, when we were alone,—'I like to astonish Englishmen; they come abroad full of Shakespeare, and contempt for the dramatic literature of

other nations. They think it blasphemy to find a fault in his writings, which are full of them. People talk of my writings, and yet read the sonnets to Master Hughes.

"And yet," continues Finlay, "he continually had the most melodious lines of Shakespeare in his mouth, as examples of blank verse."

The jealousy of Shakespeare attributed to Byron is, however, nothing when compared to the ridiculous assertion, that he was jealous of Keats, simply because he had repeated in joke what the papers and Shelley himself, a friend of Keats, had said, namely, "that the young poet had been killed by a criticism of the 'Quarterly.'"

But since a French critic, M. Philarète Chasles, has made the same accusation, we must pause and consider it.

At the time when Byron was more than ever penetrated with the perfection of Pope, and opposed to the romantic school,—at the time when he himself wrote his dramas according to all classical rules, —he received at Ravenna the poems of a young disciple of the Lakists, who united in himself all their exaggerated faults. This young man had the audacity—(which was almost unpardonable in the eyes of Byron)—to despise Pope, and to constitute himself at nineteen a lawgiver of poetical rules in England.

Such ridiculous pride, added to the contempt shown to his idol, incensed Byron and prevented his showing Keats the same indulgence he had shown Maturin and Blackett. He spoke severely of Keats in his famous reply to 'Blackwood's Magazine,' and to his

Cambridge friends—followers of the good old traditions. He quoted some lines of Keats, and remarked that "they were taken from the book of a young man who was learning how to write in verse, but who began by teaching others the art of poetry." Then, after a long quotation, he adds—"What precedes will show the ideas and principles professed by the regenerators of the English lyre in regard to the man who most of any contributed to its harmony, and the progress visible in their innovation."

Let us not forget to add that he styled Keats "the tadpole of the Lakists."

But the following year, when he heard that Keats had died at Rome, the victim of his inordinate self-love, and unable to be consoled for the criticism directed against his poetry, he wrote the following heartfelt, and, as it were, repentant words to Shelley:—

"I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats —is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! though, with such inordinate self-love, he would probably have not been very happy . . . . Had I known that Keats was dead, or that he was 'alive,' and so 'sensitive,' I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his attack upon Pope, and my disapprobation of his own style of writing."

To Murray he wrote the same day:—

"Is it true what Shelley writes me, that poor John

Keats died at Rome of the 'Quarterly Review'? I am very sorry for it; though I think he took the wrong line as a poet, and was spoilt by Cockneyfying and suburbing, and versifying Tooke's 'Pantheon' and Lemprière's 'Dictionary.' I know, by experience, that a savage review is hemlock to a sucking author; and the one on me (which produced the 'English Bards,' &c.) knocked me down; but I got up again. Instead of bursting a bloodvessel, I drank three bottles of claret, and began an answer, finding that there was nothing in the article for which I could lawfully knock Jeffrey on the head, in an honourable way. However, I would not be the person who wrote the homicidal article for all the honour and glory in the world, though I by no means approve of that school of scribbling which it treats upon."

Some time after, he wrote again to Murray, saying, —"You know very well that I did not approve of Keats' poetry, nor of his poetical principles, nor of his abuse of Pope. But he is dead. I beg that you will therefore omit all I have said of him either in my manuscripts or in my publications. His 'Hyperion' is a fine monument, and will cause his name to last. I do not envy the man who wrote the article against Keats."

Several months later, he made complete amends. He added to his severe article in answer to Blackwood, a note in the following terms:—

"I have read the article before and since; and although it is bitter, I do not think that a man should permit himself to be killed by it. But a young man little dreams what he must inevitably

encounter in the course of a life ambitious of public notice. My indignation at Mr. Keats' depreciation of Pope has hardly permitted me do justice to his own genius, which, *malgré* all the fantastic fopperies of his style, was undoubtedly of great promise. His fragment of 'Hyperion' seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus. He is a loss to our literature; and the more so, as he himself, before his death, is said to have been persuaded that he had not taken the right line, and was reforming his style upon the more classical models of the language."

Were we wrong in saying that the accusations against Byron, with respect to Keats, did not deserve a notice? If we have noticed them, it has been merely to show, that the French critic should have judged matters in this instance with greater conscientiousness and reflection.

Influenced as Byron always was by his own ideas of beauty, he required in the authors themselves certain moral qualities which would demand for their works the bestowal of his praise. It was not only their talent, but their loyalty, their independence of character, their political consistency, and their perfect honesty, which endeared Walter Scott, Moore, and others, to him.

Byron, on the other hand, had never found these qualities in the Lakists, and especially in the head of their school, whose whole life, on the contrary, bore the marks of quite opposite characteristics. Since Southey's dream of a life of intimacy with other poets of his school, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, in some blissful remote spot from which they would

publish their works in common, and where they would live with their wives and children in community of interests, some change had taken place; for Southey had so far deviated from his purpose as to become Laureate, to write for himself, and to profess ultra-Tory principles, the ultimate objects of which could not but be palpable.

All this called for Byron's contempt. To this contempt, however, he gave no expression, for fear of wounding without reason, until that reason did arise by the Laureate's unforgiving spirit. "The Laureate," says Byron, "is not one of those who can forgive." Incapable of forgetting that Byron's genius had obscured his own reputation, Southey hated Byron with an intensity, such as to make him look out for opportunities of doing him an injury. This opportunity Southey found in Byron's departure for the Continent, subsequently to the unfortunate result of his marriage; and not only did he join in all the calumnies which were set forth against him in England, but actually followed him to Switzerland, there to invent new ones, in the hope of crushing his reputation and ruining the fame of the poet by the depreciation of the man.

Lord Byron for some time was ignorant of the Laureate's baseness, for oftentimes friends deem it prudent to hide the truth which it would perhaps be better to make known. But when he came to know of them, his whole soul revolted, as naturally must be the case with a man of honour, and in 'Don Juan' he came down upon Southey with a double-edged sword, throwing ridi-

cule upon the author's writings, and odium upon his conduct as a calumniator.

This revenge was well deserved. It was not only natural but just, and even necessary, for it was requisite to show up the man, to judge of the value to be attached to his calumnies; and later, when he called him out, he did what honour required of him.

We have seen elsewhere how far the Laureate's conduct justified Byron's retaliation. It is enough, therefore, that I should have shown here that Byron's anger was rather the result of Southey's envy than his own, and that his sarcasms were due entirely to the disgust which he felt for such dishonourable proceedings.

From that time his language, when speaking of Wordsworth and Coleridge, always reflected the same disgust. Both had made themselves the echoes of Southey, and both had been inconstant from interested motives, and had solicited favours from the party in power, which they had abused in their writings. "They have each a price," said Byron at Pisa.

On one occasion, as Shelley and Medwin were laughing at some of Wordsworth's last poems, which disgusted them, not only from the subservient spirit to Toryism which pervaded them, but also excited their laughter from their absurdity, Byron, in whose house they were, said to them, "It is satisfactory to see that a man who becomes mercenary, and traffics upon the independence of his character, loses at the same time his talent as a poet."

Byron had such a notion of political consistency,

that he ceased having any regard for those who failed in this respect.

"I was at dinner," says Stendhall, "at the Marquis of Breno's at Milan, in 1816, with Byron and the celebrated poet Monti, the author of 'Basvilliana.' The conversation fell upon poetry, and the question was asked which were the twelve most beautiful lines written in a century, either in English, in Italian, or in French. The Italians present agreed in declaring that Monti's first twelve lines in the 'Mascheroniana' were the finest Italian lines written for a century. Monti recited them. I observed Byron. He was in raptures. That kind of haughty look which a man often puts on when he has to get rid of an inopportune question, and which rather took away from the beauty of his magnificent countenance, suddenly disappeared to make way for an expression of happiness. The whole of the first canto to the 'Mascheroniana,' which Conti was made to recite, enchanted all hearers, and caused the liveliest pleasure to the author of 'Childe Harold.' Never shall I forget the sublime expression of his countenance: it was the peaceful look of power united with genius."

He learnt, later, that Monti was a man inconsistent in his politics, and that on the sole impulse of his passions he had passed from one party to another, and had called from the pen of another poet the remark that he justified Dante's saying,—

"Il verso si non l' animo costante."

Byron's sympathy for Monti ceased from that time, and he even called him the "Giuda del Parnaso," whereas his esteem and sympathy for Silvio Pellico,

for Manzoni, and for many other Italians, remained perfectly unshaken.

His sense of justice extended to all nationalities. He was a cosmopolite, and, provided the elements essential to claim his admiration existed both in the man's work, and in his character, no personal consideration ever came in the way of his bestowing praise,—the most pleasing duty that could befal him. The great minds of antiquity, those of the middle ages—especially the Italians,—all the modern great men, of whatever nation, were all for him of one country, the country of great intellects, and the degree of his sympathy for each was calculated upon the degree of their merit.

We know how nobly he defended Dante, the greatest of Italian poets; how ably he translated 'Francesca da Rimini,' and how he exposed the error of those who did not find that Dante was not sufficiently pathetic.

We know his admiration for Goethe, who was not only his contemporary, but also his rival. Could Goethe see with pleasure another star rise in the horizon, when his own was at its zenith? Some say that he could. Without sharing altogether in this opinion, it is impossible, however, not to find that the first impressions which he gave to the world with respect to Byron do not justify the accusations of those who said he was jealous of him.

While at Ravenna, Byron received several numbers of a German paper edited and written by Goethe. It contained several articles upon English literature, and, amongst others, upon 'Manfred.' Curious to know what the patriarch of German literature

thought of him, and being unable to read German, Byron sent these articles to Hoppner, at Venice, begging him to translate them.

" . . . if I may judge by two notes of admiration (generally put after something ridiculous by us), and the word '*hypocondrisch*,' they are anything but favourable. I shall regret this; for I should have been proud of Goethe's good word; but I sha'n't alter my opinion of him, even though he should be (savage) . . . . Never mind—soften nothing—I am *literary proof*—as one says of a material object, when he puts it to the proof of fire and water," &c.

The article was anything but favourable. After recognizing that the author of 'Manfred' is gifted with wonderful genius, Goethe pretends that it is an imitation of his 'Faust,' and thereupon writes a tissue of fanciful notions which he palms off upon the world.

On learning all this, Byron was by no means put out, but laughed heartily at the notion of the author of 'Werther' accusing him of inciting others to a disgust of life. He wondered at such a man as Goethe giving credence to such silly fables, and giving out as authentic what were merely suppositions. Instead of being angry at this evident hostility, he declared that the article was intended as favourable to him, and, as an acknowledgment, wished to dedicate to him the tragedy of 'Marino Faliero,' upon which he was engaged. In the dedication, which was only projected, the reality of his admiration for Goethe soars above some jesting expressions.

To Goethe also he wished to dedicate 'Sardana-

palus.' "I mean," said he, at Pisa, "to dedicate 'Werner' to Goethe. I look upon him as the greatest genius that the age has produced. I desired Murray to inscribe his name to a former work; but he said my letter containing the order came too late. It would have been more worthy of him than this. I have a great curiosity about everything relating to Goethe, and please myself with thinking there is some analogy between our characters and writings. So much interest do I take in him, that I offered to give £100 to any person who would translate his memoirs for my own reading. Shelley has sometimes explained part of them to me. He seems to be very superstitious, and is a believer in astrology, or rather was, for he was very young when he wrote the first part of his 'Life.' I would give the world to read 'Faust' in the original. I have been urging Shelley to translate it." In comparing 'Cain' to 'Faust,' he said, "'Faust' itself is not so fine a subject as 'Cain,' which is a grand mystery. The mark that was put upon Cain is a sublime and shadowy act; Goethe would have made more of it than I have done."

Not being able to dedicate 'Sardanapalus' to him, he dedicated 'Werner' "to the illustrious Goethe, by one of his humblest admirers."

All these tokens of sympathy pleased Goethe. Their mutual admiration of one another brought on an exchange of courtesies, which ended by creating on both sides quite a warm feeling. In a letter which Goethe wrote to M. M——, after Byron's death, he speaks of his relation with the noble poet; after saying how 'Sardanapalus' appeared without a dedi-

cation, of which, however, he was happy to possess a lithographed facsimile, he adds :—

"It appeared, however, that the noble lord had not renounced his project of showing his contemporary and companion in letters a striking testimony of his friendly intentions, of which the tragedy of 'Werner' contains an extremely precious evidence."

It might naturally be expected that the aged German poet, after receiving from so celebrated a person such an unhoped-for kindness (proof of a disposition so thoroughly amiable, and the more to be prized from its rarity in the world), should also prepare, on his part, to express most clearly and forcibly a sense of the gratitude and esteem with which he was affected :—

"But this undertaking was so great, and every day seemed to make it so much more difficult; for what could be said of an earthly being whose merit could not be exhausted by thought, or comprehended by words?

"But when, in the spring of 1823, a young man of amiable and engaging manners, a M. St. ——, brought direct from Genoa to Weimar, a few words under the hand of this estimable friend, by way of recommendation, and when, shortly after, there was spread a report that the noble lord was about to consecrate his great powers and varied talents to high and perilous enterprize, I had no longer a plea for delay, and addressed to him the stanzas which end by the lines,—'And he self-known, e'en as to me he's known!'

"These verses," continued Goethe, "arrived at Genoa, but found him not. This excellent friend

had already sailed; but being driven back by contrary winds, he landed at Leghorn, where this effusion of my heart reached him. On the era of his departure, July 23, 1823, he found time to send me a reply, full of the most beautiful ideas and the divinest sentiments, which will be treasured as an invaluable testimony of worth and friendship, among the choicest documents which I possess.

"What emotions of joy and hope did not that paper at once excite! but now it has become, by the premature death of its noble writer, an inestimable relic, and a source of unspeakable regret; for it aggravates, to a peculiar degree in me, the mourning and melancholy that pervade the whole moral and poetical world,—in me, who looked forward (after the success of his great efforts) to the prospect of being blessed with the sight of this master-spirit of the age—this friend so fortunately acquired: and of having to welcome, on his return, the most humane of conquerors."

These are, no doubt, most noble words, but they were called forth by the still nobler conduct of Byron towards him. It cannot be said that Goethe ever appreciated all that there was of worth in his young rival, and a few words at the end of his letter make one believe that he still credited some of the absurd stories which he had been told about Byron's youth, and whom he still believed to be identified in the person of 'Manfred.' He entertained a great affection for Byron, no doubt, but he believed, however, that indulgence and forgiveness were not only necessary on his part, but actually generous in him.

Lord Byron's sympathetic admiration had this

peculiarity,—that it did not attach to one class of individuals devoted like himself to poetry, but extended to every class of society. The statesman, the orator, the philosopher, the prince, the subject, the learned, women, general, or literary men, all were equally sure of having justice done to them. At every page of his memoranda, we find instances of this. Thus of Mackintosh he says: "He is a rare instance of the union of every transcendant talent and great good-nature."

Of Curran he speaks in the most enthusiastic terms:—

"I have met Curran at Holland House—he beats everybody;—his imagination is beyond conception, and his humour (it is difficult to define what is wit) perfect. Then he has fifty faces, and twice as many voices, when he mimics; I never met his equal. Now, were I a woman, and e'en a virgin, that is the man I should make my Scamander. He is quite fascinating. Remember, I have met him only once, and I almost fear to meet him again, lest the impression should be lowered.

"Curran! Curran's the man who struck me most. Such imagination! There never was anything like it, that ever I saw or heard of. His *published* life—his published speeches—give you no idea of the man, none at all."

In his memoranda there were equally enthusiastic praises of Curran. "The riches," said he, "of his Irish imagination were exhaustless. I have heard that man speak more poetry than I have ever written—though I saw him seldom, and but occasionally."

In speaking of Colman, he said, "He was most agreeable and sociable. He can laugh so well, which Sheridan cannot. If I could not have them both together, I should like to begin the evening with Sheridan, and finish it with Colman."

He praised loudly the eloquence of Grattan :—

"I differ with him in politics, but I agree with all those who admire his eloquence."

As to Sheridan, he never ceased his eulogies :—

"At Lord Holland's, the other night, we were all delivering our respective and various opinions on him and other *hommes marquants*, and mine was this :—'Whatever Sheridan has done, or chosen to do, has been, *par excellence*, always the *best* of its kind. He has written the *best* comedy ('School for Scandal'), the *best* drama (in my mind, far before that St. Giles's lampoon, the 'Beggars' Opera'), the *best* farce (the 'Critic,'—it is only too good for a farce), and the *best* address ('Monologue on Garrick'), and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration (the famous 'Begum Speech') ever conceived or heard in this country."

His enthusiasm for Sheridan partook even of a kind of tender compassion for his great weaknesses and misfortunes. He wrote in his memoranda, on one occasion, when Sheridan had cried with joy on hearing that Byron had warmly praised him :—

"Poor Brinsley, if they were tears of pleasure, I would rather have said those few, but most sincere words, than have written the 'Iliad,' or made his own celebrated 'Philippic.' Nay, his own comedy never gratified me more, than to hear that he had derived a moment's gratification from any praise of mine,

humble as it must appear to 'my elders and my betters.'"

And also:—

"Poor, dear Sherry! I shall never forget the day when he, Rogers, Moore, and myself, spent the time from six at night till one o'clock in the morning, without a single yawn; we listening to him, and he talking all the time."

When he speaks of great men recently dead,—of Burke, Pitt, Burns, Goldsmith, and others of his distinguished contemporaries,—he is never-ending in his praise of them. His affectionate admiration for so many went so far, almost, as to frighten him into the belief that it was a weakness: after having said—"I like A——, I like B——. By Mahomet!" he exclaims in his memoranda, "I begin to think I like everybody; a disposition not to be encouraged; a sort of social gluttony, that swallows everything set before it."

Not only was it a pleasure to him to praise those who deserved it, but he would not allow the dead to be blamed, nor the illustrious among the living; we all know how much he admired the talents of Madame de Staël: "Il avait pour elle des admirations *obstinées*." "Campbell abused Corinne," he says in his journal, 1813: "I reverence and admire him; but I won't give up my opinion. Why should I? I read her again and again, and there can be no affectation in this. I cannot be mistaken (except in taste) in a book I read and lay down and take up again; and no book can be totally bad, which finds some, even *one* reader, who can say as much sincerely."

And elsewhere:

"H—— laughed, as he does at everything German, in which, however, I think he goes a little too far. B——, I hear, contemns it too. But there are fine passages; and, after all, what is a work—any or every work—but a desert with fountains, and, perhaps, a grove or two every day's journey? To be sure, in Mademoiselle, what we often mistake and 'pant for' as the 'cooling stream,' turns out to be the 'mirage' (*criticé*, verbiage); but we do, at last, get to something like the temple of Jupiter Ammon, and then the waste we have passed is only remembered to gladden the contrast."

He who was so sparing of answers to his own detractors, could not allow a criticism against a friend to be left unanswered. We have seen how he defended Scott, Shelley, Coleridge, and numerous other remarkable persons, whenever they were unjustly attacked, although they were alive to defend themselves. The respect and justice which he claimed for the dead was equally proportioned. "Do not forget," he wrote to Moore, on hearing that he was about to write the 'Life of Sheridan;' "do not forget *to spare the living without insulting the dead.*"

On reading, at Ravenna, that Schlegel said, that Dante was not popular in Italy, and accused him of want of pathos: "'Tis false," said he, with indignation; "there have been more editors and commentators (and imitators ultimately) of Dante, than of all their poets put together. *Not* a favourite! Why, they talk Dante, write Dante, and think and dream Dante at this moment (1821) to an excess which would be ridiculous, but that he deserves it.

"In the same style this German talks of gondolas

on the Arno—a precious fellow to dare to speak of Italy!

"He says, also, that Dante's chief defect is a want, in a word, of gentle feelings. Of gentle feelings! and this in the face of 'Francesca of Rimini'—and the father's feelings in 'Ugolino'—and 'Beatrice'—and 'La Pia'! Why, there is a gentleness in Dante beyond all gentleness, when he is tender. It is true, that in treating of the Christian Hades, or Hell, there is not much scope or room for gentleness; but who *but* Dante could have introduced any 'softness' at all into Hell? Is there any in Milton? No—and Dante's heaven is all *love*, and *glory*, and *majesty*."

We have alluded to his admiration for Pope. It was such as to appear almost a kind of filial love. He was sorry, mortified, and humbled, not to find in Westminster Abbey the monument of so great a man:—

"Of all the disgraces that attach to England, the greatest," said he, "is that there should be no place assigned to Pope in Poets' Corner. I have often thought of erecting a monument to him at my own expense in Westminster Abbey; and hope to do so yet."

To add anything more to show how totally Byron was free from all sentiments of an envious nature, would be to exhaust the subject, and to abuse the reader's patience. This absence of envy in him shows itself so clearly in all his sayings and doings, that it appears to be impossible to doubt it, and yet he has not been spared even such a calumny! I do not allude to the French critics, who neither knew the man nor the author, and whose systematic

attacks have no value; but I allude to a certain article in the 'London Magazine,' which appeared shortly before his death, under the title of 'Personal Character of Lord Byron,' and which caused some sensation because it appeared to have been written by some one who had known Byron intimately. It was all the more perfidious because it gave an appearance of truth to a great many falsehoods, derived from the truth with which these falsehoods were mixed. It was the work of one who had gone to Greece, there to play a great part, but who, having failed in his attempt and exposed himself to the laughter of his friends, felt a kind of jealousy for Byron's success in that line, and revenged himself by saying, among other things, "that it was dangerous for Byron's friends to rise in the world, if they preferred his friendship to their glory, because, as soon as they arrived at a certain pre-eminence, he was sure to hate them."

Such a calumny exasperated Byron's real friends, and amongst these Count Gamba, who hastened to reply to it, by publishing an interesting book, precious from its veracity, and which does equal credit to Byron and to the young man honoured with his friendship. After analysing the anonymous article, Count Gamba goes on to say: "My own opinion is just the contrary to that of the writer in the magazine. I think he prided himself on the successes of his friends, and cited them as a proof of discernment in the choice of some of his companions. This I know, that of envy he had not the least spark in his whole disposition: he had strong antipathies, certainly, to one or two individuals; but I have always

understood, from those most likely to know, that he never broke with any of the friends of his youth, and that his earliest attachments were also his last."

It may be remarked that Byron's popularity made it difficult for him to indulge sentiments of envy. But without referring to the unstable character of popularity, was not his own attacked by the jealousy of those who wished to pull him down from the pedestal of fame, to which they hoped themselves to rise? Did he not think, some years before his death, that his popularity was wavering, and that his rivals would profit by it? Was he less pleased at the success of his friends? Does not all he said, and all he did, prove that where he blamed he did so unwillingly, from a sense of justice and truth; but that when he praised, he did so to satisfy a desire of his heart?

We have dwelt at considerable length upon this subject, because we believe that a total absence of envy is so rare among poets, and so conspicuous in Lord Byron, that we can take it to be the criterion of his nobility of soul. We can sum up, therefore, all we have said, by declaring, that if Byron has been envied by all his enemies, and even his friends, with, perhaps, the exception of Shelley, and has not himself envied one, though he suffered personally from the consequences of their jealousy, it is because the great kindness of his nature made him the least envious of men.

CHAPTER IX.

BENEVOLENCE AND KINDNESS OF LORD BYRON.

Benevolence.

The benevolence of Byron's character constitutes the principal characteristic of his nature, and was particularly remarkable from its power. All the good qualities in Byron do not show the same force in the same degree. In all the sentiments which we have analysed and given in proof of his goodness, though each may be very strong, and even capable of inspiring him with the greatest sacrifice, yet one might find in each that personal element, inherent in different degrees to our purest and most generous affections, since the impulse which dictates them is evidently based upon a desire to be satisfied with ourselves. The same thing might be said of his benevolence, had it been only the result of habit: but if it had been this, if it had been intermittent, and of that kind which does not exclude occasional harshness and even cruelty, I would not venture to present it to the reader as a proof of Byron's goodness.

His benevolence had nothing personal in its elements. It was a kind of universal and habitual charity, which gives without hope of return, which is more occupied with the good of others than with its own, and which is called for only by the instinctive desire to alleviate the sufferings of others. If

such a quality has no right to be called a virtue, it nevertheless imprints upon the man who possesses it an ineffaceable character of greatness.

There was not a single moment in his life in which it did not reveal itself in the most touching actions. We have seen how neither happiness nor misfortune could alter it.

As a child, he went one day to bathe with a little schoolfellow in the Don, in Scotland, and having but one very small Shetland pony between them, each one walked and rode alternately. When they reached the bridge, at a point where the river becomes sombre and romantic, Byron, who was on foot, recollected a legendary prophesy, which says:—

> "Brig o' Balgounie, black's your wa':
> Wi' a wife's ae son and a mare's ae foal
> Doun ye shall fa'!"

Little Byron stopped his companion, asked him if he remembered the prediction, and declared that as the pony might very well be "a mare's ae foal," he intended to cross first, for although both only sons, his mother alone would mourn him, while the death of his friend, whose father and mother were both alive, would cause a twofold grief.*

As a stripling, he saw at Southwell a poor woman sally mournfully from a shop, because the Bible she wished to purchase costs more money than she possesses. Byron hastens to buy it, and, full of joy, runs after the poor creature to give it to her. As a young man, at an age when the effervescence and giddiness of youth forget many things, he never forgot that to seduce a young girl is a crime.

* Galt's Life of Byron, 329.

Then, as ever, he was less the seducer than the seduced.

Moore tells us that Byron was so keenly sensitive to the pleasure or pain of those with whom he lived, that while in his imaginary realms he defied the universe, in real life a frown or a smile could overcome him.

Proud, energetic, independent, intrepid, benevolence alone rendered Lord Byron so flexible, patient, and docile to the remonstrances or reproaches of those who loved him, and to whom he allowed friendly motives, that he often sacrificed his own talent to this genial and kindly sentiment. The Rev. Mr. Beecher, disapproving as too free one of the poems he had just published at the age of seventeen, in his first edition of the 'Hours of Idleness,' Lord Byron *withdrew* and *burnt* the whole edition. At the solicitation of Dallas and Gifford he suppresses, in the second canto of 'Childe Harold,' the very stanzas he preferred to all the rest. Madame G——, grieved at the persecution drawn down on him by the first canto of 'Don Juan,' begs him to discontinue the poem, and he ceased to write it.

At the request of Madame de Staël, he consented, in spite of his great disinclination, to attempt a reconciliation with Lady Byron.

The 'Curse of Minerva,' a poem written in Greece, while he was still painfully impressed by the artistic piracies of Lord Elgin in the 'Parthenon,' was in the press and on the eve of publication; but Lord Elgin's friends reminded him of the pain it would inflict on him and on his family, and the poem was sacrificed. No one ever bore more generously than he with re-

proaches made with good-will and kindness. This amiable disposition, observed in Greece by Mr. Finlay, led him to say that it amazed him. As regards Lord Byron's tenderness towards his friends, it was always so great and constant, that we have thought it right to devote a long article to it. We will, however, quote as another instance of the delicacy of his friendship and his fear of offending his friends, or of giving them pain, a letter which Moore also cites as a proof of his extreme sensitiveness in this respect.

This letter was addressed to Mr. Bankes, his friend and college companion, on one occasion when Byron believed he had offended him involuntarily :—

"MY DEAR BANKES,

"My eagerness to come to an explanation, has, I trust, convinced you that whatever my unlucky manner might inadvertently be, the change was as unintentional as (if intended) it would have been ungrateful. I really was not aware that, while we were together, I had evinced such caprice. That we were not so much in each other's company as I could have wished, I well know; but I think so astute an observer as yourself must have perceived enough to explain this, without supposing any slight to one in whose society I have pride and pleasure. Recollect that I do not allude here to 'extended' or 'extending' acquaintances, but to circumstances you will understand, I think, on a little reflection.

"And now, my dear Bankes, do not distress me by supposing that I can think of you, or you of me, otherwise than I trust we have long thought. You

told me not long ago, that my temper was improved, and I should be sorry that opinion should be revoked. Believe me, your friendship is of more account to me than all those absurd vanities in which, I fear, you conceive me to take too much interest. I have never disputed your superiority, or doubted (seriously) your good-will, and no one shall ever 'make mischief between us' without the sincere regret on the part of your ever affectionate, &c.

"BYRON."

In the midst of the unexampled enthusiasm of a whole nation, Byron is neither touched by the adoration which his genius inspires, nor the endless praises which are bestowed upon him, nor the love declarations which crowd his table, nor the flattering expressions of Lord Holland, who ranks him next to Walter Scott as a poet, and to Burke as an orator; nor, indeed, by those of Lord Fitzgerald, who, notwithstanding a flogging at Harrow, cannot bear malice against the author of 'Childe Harold,' but desires to forgive. To be the friend of those whom his satire offended, so penetrates him with disgust for that poem, that his dearest wish is to lose every trace of it; and, though the fifth edition is nearly completed, he gives orders to his publisher, Cawthorn, to burn the whole edition.

It is well known that on the occasion of the opening of the new Drury Lane Theatre, the committee called upon all England's poetical talent for an inaugural address. The committee received many, but found none worthy of adoption. It was then that Lord Holland advised that Lord Byron should be applied to,

whose genius and popularity would enhance, he said, the solemnity of the occasion. Lord Byron, after a refusal, and much hesitation arising partly from modesty and partly from the knowledge that the rejected authors would make him pay a heavy price for his triumph, at last, with much reluctance, accepted the invitation, merely to oblige Lord Holland. He exchanged with the latter on this topic a long correspondence, revealing so thoroughly his docility and modesty, that Moore declares these letters valuable as an illustration of his character; they show, in truth, the exceeding pliant good-nature with which he listened to the counsel and criticism of his friends. "It cannot be questioned," says he, "that this docility, which he invariably showed in matters upon which most authors are generally tenacious and irritable, was a natural essence of his character, and which might have been displayed on much more important occasions had he been so fortunate as to become connected with people capable of understanding and of guiding him."

Another time Moore wrote to him at Pisa :— "Knowing you as I do, Lady Byron ought to have discovered, that you are the most docile and most amiable man that ever existed, for those who live with you."

His hatred of contradiction and petty teasing, his repugnance to annoy or mortify anyone, arose from the same cause. Once, after having replied with his usual frankness to an inquiry of Madame de Staël, *that he thought a certain step ill-advised*, he wrote in his memorandum-book :—"I have since reflected that it would be possible for Mrs. B—— to be patroness ;

and I regret having given my opinion, as I detest getting people into difficulties with themselves or their favourites."

And again :—

"To-day C—— called, and, while sitting here, in came Merivale. During our colloquy, C—— (ignorant that M—— was the writer) abused the mawkishness of the 'Quarterly Review,' on Grimm's correspondence. I (knowing the secret) changed the conversation as soon as I could, and C—— went away quite convinced of having made the most favourable impression on his new acquaintance. . . . . I did not look at him while this was going on, but I felt like a coal; for I like Merivale, as well as the article in question."

HIS INDULGENCE.

His indulgence, so great towards all, was excessive towards his inferiors.

"Lord Byron," says Medwin, "was the best of masters, and it may be asserted that he was beloved by his servants; his goodness even extended to their families. He liked them to have their children with them. I remember, on one occasion, as we entered the hall, coming back from our walk, we met the coachman's son, a boy of three or four years of age. Byron took the child up in his arms and gave him ten pauls."

"His indulgence towards his servants," says Mr. Hoppner, "was almost reprehensible, for even when they neglected their duty, he appeared rather to laugh at than to scold them, and he never could make up his mind to send them away, even after threatening to do so."

Mr. Hoppner quotes several instances of this indulgence, which he frequently witnessed. I will relate one in which his kindness almost amounts to virtue. On the point of leaving for Ravenna, whither his heart passionately summoned him, Tita Falier, his gondolier, is taken for the conscription. To release him it is not only necessary to pay money, but also to take certain measures, and to delay his departure. The money was given, and the much-desired journey postponed.

"The result was," says Hoppner, "that his servants were so attached to him that they would have borne everything for his sake. His death plunged them into the deepest grief. I have in my possession a letter written to his family by Byron's gondolier, Tita, who followed him from Venice to Greece, and remained with him until his death. The poor fellow speaks of his master in touching terms: he declares that in Byron he has lost rather a father than a master, and he does not cease to dilate upon the goodness with which Byron looked after the interests of all who served him."

Fletcher also wrote to Murray after his master's death:—"Pray forgive this scribbling, for I scarcely know what I do and say. I have served Lord Byron for twenty years, and his lordship was always to me rather a father than a master. I am too distressed to be able to give you any particulars about his death."

Lord Byron's benevolence also shone forth in his tenderness towards children, in the pleasure he experienced in mingling in their amusements, and in making them presents. In general, to procure a

moment's enjoyment to any one was real happiness to him.

Quite as humane as he was benevolent, cruelty or ferocity he could not brook, even in imagination. His genius, although so bold, could not bear too harrowing a plot. "I wanted to write something upon that subject," he told Shelley at Pisa, "as it is extremely tragical, but it was too heartrending for my nerves to cope with."

His works, moreover, from beginning to end, prove this. An analysis of the character of all his heroes will prove that, however daring, they are never ferocious, harsh, nor perverse. Even Conrad the Corsair, whose type is sketched from a ferocious race, and who is placed in circumstances that tempt to inhumanity,—Conrad is yet far removed from cruelty. The drop of blood on Gulnare's fair brow makes him shudder, and almost forget that it was to save him that she became guilty. The cruel deeds of a man not only prevented Lord Byron from feeling the least sympathy for him, but even made gratitude towards him a burthen. However much Ali Pasha, the fierce Viceroy of Janina, may overwhelm him with kindness, wish to treat him as a son, address him in writing as "Excellentissime and Carissime," the cruelties of such a friend are too revolting for Byron to profit by his offer of services. He calls him the man of war and calamity, and in immortal verse perpetuates the memory of his crimes, and even *foretells the death he actually died a few years later.* He can forgive him the weakness of the flesh, but not those crimes which are deaf to pity's voice, and which, to be

condemned in every man, are still more so in an old man :—

> "Blood follows blood, and through this mortal span
> In bloodier acts conclude those who with blood began."

The recollection of human massacres spoilt in his eyes even a beautiful spot. In exalting the Rhine, the beautiful river he so much admired, the remembrance of all the blood spilt on its banks saddened his heart :—

> "Then to see
> Thy valley of sweet waters, were to know
> Earth paved like Heaven; and to seem such to me
> Even now what wants thy stream?—that it should Lethe be:
> * * * * * * * *
> But o'er the blacken'd memory's blighting dream
> Thy waves would vainly roll, all sweeping as they seem."

As to being himself a witness and spectator of scenes of violence, it was an effort which exceeded the strength, however great, of his will. Gifted with much psychological curiosity, and holding the theory that everything should be seen, he was present at Rome at the execution of three murderers, who were to be put to death, on the eve of his departure. This spectacle agitated him to such a degree that it brought on a fever.

In Spain he attended a bull fight. The painful impression produced by the barbarous sight is immortalised in verse (*vide* 'Childe Harold,' 1st canto.)

But his actions, above all, testify to his humane disposition. He never heard of the misfortune or suffering of a fellow-creature without endeavouring to relieve it, whether in London, Venice, Ravenna, Pisa, or Greece; he spared neither gold, time, nor labour to achieve this object. At Pisa, hearing

that a wretched man, guilty of a sacrilegious theft, was to be condemned to cruel torture, he became ill with dread and anxiety. He wrote to the English ambassador, and to the consuls, begging for their interposition; neglected no chance, and did not rest until he acquired the certainty that the penalty inflicted on the culprit would be more humane.

In Greece, where traits of generous compassion fill the rest of his life, Count Gamba relates that Colonel Napier, then residing in the Island of Cephalonia, one day rode in great haste to Lord Byron, to ask for his assistance, a number of workmen, employed in making a road, having been buried under the crumbling side of a mountain, in consequence of an imprudent operation. Lord Byron immediately despatched his physician, and, although just sitting down to table, had his horses saddled, and galloped off to the scene of the disaster, accompanied by Count Gamba and his suite. Women and children wept and moaned, the crowd each moment increased, lamentations were heard on all sides, but, whether from despair or laziness, none came forward. Generous anger overcame Lord Byron at this scene of woe and shame; he leapt from his horse, and, grasping the necessary implements, began with his own hands the work of setting free the poor creatures, who were there buried alive. His example aroused the courage of the others, and the catastrophe was thus mitigated by the rescue of several victims. Count Gamba, after dwelling on the good Lord Byron did everywhere, and on the admirable life he led in Greece, expresses himself as follows in a letter to Mr. Kennedy :—

"One of his principal objects in Greece was to awaken the Turks as well as the Greeks to more humane sentiments. You know how he hastened, whenever the opportunity arose, to purchase the freedom of women and children, and to send them back to their homes. He frequently, and not without incurring danger to himself, rescued Turks from the sanguinary grasp of the Greek corsairs. When a Moslem brig drifted ashore near Missolonghi, the Greeks wanted to capture the whole crew; but Lord Byron opposed it, and promised a reward of a crown for each sailor, and of two for each officer rescued."

"Coming to Greece," wrote Lord Byron, "one of my principal objects was to alleviate, as much as possible, the miseries incident to a warfare so cruel as the present. When the dictates of humanity are in question, I know no difference between Turks and Greeks. It is enough that those who want assistance are men, in order to claim the pity and protection of the meanest pretender to humane feelings. I have found here twenty-four Turks, including women and children, who have long pined in distress, far from the means of support and the consolations of their home. The Government has consigned them to me: I transmit them to Prevesa, whither they desire to be sent. I hope you will not object to take care that they may be restored to a place of safety, and that the Governor of your town may accept of my present. The best recompense I could hope for would be to find that I had inspired the Ottoman commanders with the same sentiments towards those unhappy Greeks, who may hereafter fall into their hands. "BYRON."

"Lord Byron," pursues Count Gamba, "never could witness a calamity as an idle spectator. He was so alive to the sufferings of others, that he sometimes allowed himself to be imposed upon too readily by tales of woe. The least semblance of injustice excited his indignation, and led him to intervene without a thought for the consequences to himself of his interposition; and he entertained this feeling not only for his fellow-creatures but even towards animals."

His compassion extended to every living creature, to everything that could feel. Without alluding to his well-known fondness for dogs, and for the animals of every kind he liked to have about him, and of which he took the greatest care, it will be sufficient to point out the motive which led him to deprive himself of the pleasures of the chase,—a pastime that would have been, from his keen enjoyment of bodily exercises, so congenial to his tastes. The reason is found in his memorandum for 1814:—

"The last bird I ever fired at was an eaglet, on the shore of the Gulf of Lepanto, near Vostitza. It was only wounded, and I tried to save it, the eye was so bright: but it pined and died in a few days; and I never did since, and never will, attempt the death of another bird."

Angling, as well as shooting, he considered cruel.

> "And angling, too, that solitary vice,
> Whatever Izaak Walton sings or says:
> The quaint, old, cruel coxcomb, in his gullet
> Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it."

And, as if he feared not to have expressed strongly enough his aversion for the cruelties of angling, he adds in a note:—

"It would have taught him humanity at least. This sentimental savage, whom it is a mode to quote (amongst the novelists) to show their sympathy for innocent sports and old songs, teaches how to sew up frogs, and break their legs by way of experiment, in addition to the art of angling,—the cruelest, the coldest, and the stupidest of pretended sports. They may talk about the beauties of nature, but the angler merely thinks of his dish of fish; he has no leisure to take his eyes from off the streams, and a single bite is worth to him more than all the scenery around. Besides, some fish bite best on a rainy day. The whale, the shark, and the tunny fishery have somewhat of noble and perilous in them; even net-fishing, trawling, &c., are more humane and useful. But angling!—no angler can be a good man."

"One of the best men I ever knew (as humane, delicate minded, generous, and excellent a creature as any in the world) was an angler; true, he angled with painted flies, and would have been incapable of the extravagances of Izaak Walton."

"The above addition was made by a friend, in reading over the MS.:—'*Audi alteram partem*'—I leave it to counterbalance my own observation."

It is well known that Lord Byron would not deride certain superstitions, and was sometimes tempted to exclaim with Hamlet,—

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

He, consequently, also conformed to the English superstition, which involves, under pain of an unlucky year, the eating of a goose at Michaelmas. Alas! once only he did not eat one, and that year was his last;

but he eat none because, during the journey from Pisa to Genoa, on Michaelmas eve, he saw the two white geese in their cage in the waggon that followed his carriage, and felt so sorry for them that he gave orders they should be spared. After his arrival at Genoa they became such pets that he caressed them constantly. When he left for Greece he recommended them to the care of Mr. Kennedy, who was probably kind to them for the sake of their illustrious protector.

Not only could Lord Byron never contribute voluntarily to the suffering of a living being, but his pity, his commiseration for the sufferings of his fellow creatures showed itself all his life in such habitual benevolence, in such boundless generosity, that volumes would be necessary to record his noble deeds.

Although, in thus analysing and enumerating the proofs of his innate goodness, we have declared we did not entertain the pretension of elevating them to the rank of lofty virtues, we are yet compelled to state that if his generosity was too instinctive to be termed a virtue, it was yet too admirable to be considered as an instinct; that while in remaining a quality of his heart, it elevated and transformed itself often through the exertion of his will into an absolute virtue, and through all its phases and in its double nature, it presented in Lord Byron a remarkably rare blending of all that is most loveable and estimable in the human soul.

Here we merely speak of the generosity that showed itself in benefits conferred. As to that which consists rather in self-denial, sacrifice which forgives

injuries, and which is the greatest triumph of mortal courage, that, in a word, is indeed a sublime virtue. Such generosity, if he possessed it, we will treat of in another chapter.*

As we here wish to establish by facts that only which appears to have been the impulse of his good heart, the difficulty lies in the choice of proofs, and in the necessity of limiting our narrative. We will, therefore, in order not to convert this chapter into a volume, forbear from quoting more than a few instances; but justice requires us to say, that misfortune or poverty never had recourse to him in vain; that neither the pecuniary embarrassments of his youth, nor the slender merits of the applicants, nor any of the pretexts so convenient to weak or hypocritical † liberality, ever could become a reason with him to refuse those who stretched out their hand to him. The claim of adversity, as adversity, was a sufficient and sacred one to him, and to relieve it an imperious impulse.

An appeal was once made to Lord Byron's generosity by an individual whose bad repute alone might have justified a harsh rebuff. But Lord Byron, whose charity was of a higher order, looked upon it otherwise.

"Why," said Murray, "should you give £150 to this bad writer, to whom nobody would give a

* See Chapter "Generosity raised to a Virtue."

† When travelling in Greece, he often found himself in straitened circumstances, merely because he had helped a friend.

"It is probable" he wrote to his mother from Athens in 1811, "I may steer homewards in spring: but, to enable me to do that, I must have remittances. My own funds would have lasted me very well: but I was obliged to assist a friend, who I know will pay me, but in the mean time I am out of pocket."

penny?" "Precisely because nobody is willing to give him anything is he the more in need that I should help him," answered Lord Byron.

A certain Mr. Ashe superintended the publication of a paper called 'The Book,' the readers of which were attracted rather by its ill-nature and scandal, and the revelations it made in lifting the veil that had so far concealed the most delicate mysteries, than by the talent of the author. In a fit of repentance this man wrote to Lord Byron, alleging his great poverty as an apology for having thus prostituted his pen, and imploring from Lord Byron a gift to enable him to live more honourably in future. Lord Byron's answer to this letter is so remarkable for its good sense, kindness, and high tone of honour, that we cannot refrain from reproducing it.

"SIR,—I leave town for a few days to-morrow; on my return I will answer your letter more at length. Whatever may be your situation, I cannot but commend your resolution to abjure and abandon the publication and composition of works such as those to which you have alluded. Depend upon it they amuse few, disgrace both reader and writer, and benefit none. It will be my wish to assist you, as far as my limited means will admit, to break such a bondage. In your answer inform me what sum you think would enable you to extricate yourself from the hands of your employers, and to regain, at least, temporary independence, and I shall be glad to contribute my mite towards it. At present, I must conclude. Your name is not unknown to me, and I regret, for my own sake, that you have ever lent it to the works you mention. In saying this, I merely repeat your own words in your letter to me, and

have no wish whatever to say a single syllable that may appear to insult your misfortunes. If I have, excuse me: it is unintentional.

"BYRON."

Mr. Ashe replied with a request for a sum of about four thousand francs. Lord Byron having somewhat delayed answering him, Ashe reiterated his request, complaining of the procrastination; whereupon, "with a kindness which few," says Moore, "would imitate in a similar case," Byron wrote to him as follows:—

"SIR,—When you accuse a stranger of neglect, you forget that it is possible business or absence from London may have interfered to delay his answer, as has actually occurred in the present instance. But to the point. I am willing to do what I can to extricate you from your situation. . . . . I will deposit in Mr. Murray's hands (with his consent) the sum you mentioned, to be advanced for the time at ten pounds per month.

"P.S.—I write in the greatest hurry, which may make my letter a little abrupt; but, as I said before, I have no wish to distress your feelings.

"BYRON."

Ashe, a few months later, asked for the whole amount, to defray his travelling expenses to New South Wales, and Lord Byron again remitted to him the entire amount.

On another occasion, some unhappy person being discussed in harsh terms, the remark was made that he deserved his misery. Lord Byron turned on the accuser, and fired with generous anger, "Well!" exclaimed he, "if it be true that N—— is unfortunate,

and that he be so through his own fault, he is doubly to be pitied, because his conscience must poison his grief with remorse. Such are my morals, and that is why I pity error and respect misfortune."

The produce of his poems, as long as he remained in England, he devoted to the relief of his poor relations, or to the assistance of authors in reduced circumstances. I will not speak of certain traits of heroic generosity which averted the disgrace and ruin of families, which robbed vice of many youthful victims, and would cast in the shade many deeds of past and proverbial magnanimity, and deserve the pen of a Plutarch to transmit them to posterity.

When we are told, with such admiring comments, of Alexander's magnanimity in respecting and restoring to freedom the mother and the wife of Darius, we do not learn whether those noble women were beautiful and in love with the Macedonian hero. But Lord Byron succoured, and restored to the right path, many girls, young and gifted with every charm, who were so subjugated by the beauty, goodness, and generosity of their benefactor, that they fell at his feet, not to implore that they might be sent back to their homes, but ready to become what he bade them. And yet this young man of six-and-twenty, thinking them fair, was touched, and tempted perhaps, yet sent them home, rescued, and enlightened by the counsels of wisdom.

There is more than generosity in such actions, and we therefore hold back details for another chapter, in which we will examine this quality under various aspects. Here we will content ourselves with stating that these noble traits became known, almost in spite

of himself; for his benevolence was also remarkable in this respect, that it was exercised with a truly Christian spirit, and in obedience to the Divine precept that "the left hand shall not know what the right doeth." Having conferred a great favour on one of his friends, Mr. Hodgson, who was about to take orders, he wrote in the evening in his journal:—

"H—— has been telling that I . . . . I am sure, at least, I did not mention it, and I wish he had not. He is a good fellow, and I obliged myself ten times more by being of use than I did him,—and there's an end on't." *

It was said of Chateaubriand that if he wished to do anything generous, he liked to do so on his balcony; the contrary may be said of Byron, who would have preferred to have his good action hid in the cellars.

"If we wished to dwell," says Count Gamba in a letter to Kennedy, "on his many acts of charity, a volume would not suffice to tell you of those alone to which I have been a witness. I have known in different Italian towns several honourable families, fallen into poverty, with whom Lord Byron had not the slightest acquaintance, and to whom he nevertheless *secretly* sent large sums of money, sometimes 200 dollars and more; and these persons never knew the name of their benefactor."

Count Gamba also tells us that, to his knowledge, in Florence, a respectable mother of a family, being reduced to great penury by the persecution of a

* It may be observed here, that he was not willing, even to confide to paper, the nature and degree of the act of kindness. Hodgson wanted thirty-five thousand francs to establish himself. Byron actually borrowed this amount, to give it to him, as he had not the sum at his disposal.

malignant and powerful man, from whom she had protected the honour of one of her *protégées*, Lord Byron, to whom the lady and her persecutor were equally unknown, sent her assistance, which was powerful enough to counteract the evil designs of her foes. He adds that, having learnt at Pisa that a great number of vessels had been shipwrecked during a violent storm, in the very harbour of Genoa, and that several respectable families were thereby completely ruined, Lord Byron *secretly* sent them money, and to some more than 300 dollars. Those who received it never knew their benefactor's name. His charity provided above all for absent ones, for the old, infirm and retiring. At Venice, where it was difficult to elude the influence of the climate, and of the manners of the time, and where he shared for a time the mode of life of its young men, it was still charity, and not pleasure, that absorbed the better part of his income. Not satisfied with his casual or out-of-the-way charities, he granted a large number of small monthly and weekly pensions. On definitely leaving Venice to reside in Ravenna, he decided that, in spite of his absence, these pensions should continue until the expiration of his lease of the Palazzo Mocenigo. Venice watched him as jealously as a miser watches his treasure, and when he left it the honest poor were grieved and the dishonest vexed. Listening to these, one might have been led to believe, that Lord Byron had by a vow bound himself and his fortune to the service of Venice, and that his departure was a spoliation of their rights.*

* See his 'Life in Italy.'

In Ravenna his presence had been such a blessing, that his departure was considered a public calamity, and the poor of the city addressed a petition to the Legate, that he might be entreated to remain.

Not a quarter of his fortune, as Shelley said in extolling his munificence, but the half of it, did he expend in alms. In Pisa, in Genoa, in Greece, his purse was ever open to the needy.

"Not a day of his life in Greece," says his physician, Doctor Bruno, "but was marked by some charitable deed: not an instance is there on record of a beggar having knocked at Lord Byron's door who did not go on his way comforted; so prominent among all his noble qualities was the tenderness of his heart, and its boundless sympathy with suffering and affliction. His purse was always opened to the poor." After quoting several traits of benevolence, he goes on to say:—"Whenever it came to the knowledge of Lord Byron that any poor persons were lying ill, whatever the maladies or their cause, without even being asked to do it, my lord immediately sent me to attend to the sufferers. He provided the medicines, and every other means of alleviation. He founded at his own expense a hospital in Missolonghi."*

This noble quality of his heart had the ring of true generosity; that generosity which springs from the desire and pleasure to do good, and which is so admirable, that in his own estimate of benevolence he always linked it with a sense of order. It never had anything in common with the capricious munificence of a spendthrift. His exceeding delicacy,

* Vide Kennedy.

the loyalty and noble pride of his soul, inspired him with the deepest aversion for that egotism and vanity which alike ignores its own duties and the rights of others.

Lord Byron was, therefore, very methodical in his expenditure. Without stooping to details, he was most careful to maintain equilibrium between his outlay and his income. He attended scrupulously to his bills, and said he could not go to sleep without being on good terms with his friends, and having paid all his debts.*

He was often tormented, if his agents were tardy in making remittances, with the dread of not being able to meet his engagements. Of his own gold he was liberal, but he respected the coffers of his creditors.

"I have the greatest respect for money," he often said in jest. He cared for it, indeed, but as a means of obtaining rest for his mind, and especially of helping the poor. Although so generous, he was sometimes annoyed and sorry at the thought of having ill-spent his money, because he had in the same ratio diminished his power of doing good.

We should have given but an unfair idea of the lofty nature of his generosity, if we did not add that it was not sustained by any illusory hopes of gratitude. These illusions his confiding heart had entertained in early manhood, and were those the loss of which he most regretted; but their flight, though causing bitter disappointment, left his conduct uninfluenced. He expected ingratitude, and was prepared

* "Yesterday I paid him (to Scroope Davies) four thousand eight hundred pounds . . . . and my mind is much relieved by the removal of that debt," he says in his memorandum of 1813. All his difficulties were inherited from his father, and not contracted by him personally.

for it; he *gave*, he said, and *did not lend*; and preferred to expose himself to ingratitude rather than to forsake the unhappy.

We fain would have concluded this long chapter, devoted to the proofs of his goodness in all its manifestations, by gathering the principal testimonies of that goodness which were received after Byron's death, and show it in its original character and in its modifications through life. But we must confine ourselves to the mention of a few testimonies only, taken from among those borne him at the outset and at the end of his life, so as to extend throughout its course, and to show what those who knew him personally, and well, thought of it.

Mr. Pigott, a friend and companion of Byron's, who lived at Southwell, in the neighbourhood of Newstead, who travelled with Byron during his holidays, told Moore that few people understood Byron; but that he knew well how naturally sensitive and kind-hearted he was, and that there was not the slightest particle of malignity in his whole composition. Mr. Pigott, who thus spoke of Byron, was one of the most revered magistrates of his county, and the head of that family with whom Byron was wont to spend his holidays, and who loved him, both before and after his death, as good people only can love and mourn. "Never," says Moore, "did any member of that family allow that Byron had a single fault."

Mr. Lake, another biographer of Byron, says, "I have frequently asked the country people what sort of a man Lord Byron was. The impression of his eccentric but energetic character was evident in the reply. 'He's the devil of a fellow for comical fancies

—He flogs th' oud laird to nothing, but he 's a hearty good fellow for all that.'"

Here is Dallas's opinion, which cannot be suspected of partiality, for reasons which we have elsewhere given; for he believed himself aggrieved, and considered as a great culprit the man who, ever so slightly, could depart from the orthodox religious teachings; who had not a blind admiration of his country; who could suffer his heart to be possessed by an affection which marriage had not legitimatized; who preferred to family pride the satisfaction of paying the debts bequeathed to him by his ancestors, and who could make use of his right of selling his lands. Yet, notwithstanding all this, Mr. Dallas expresses himself to the following effect:—"At this time (1809), when on the eve of publishing his first satire, and before taking his seat in the House of Lords, I saw Lord Byron every day. (This was the epoch of his misanthropy). Nature had gifted him with most amiable sentiments, which I frequently had occasion to notice, and I have often seen these imprint upon his fine countenance a really sublime expression. His features seemed made expressly to depict the conceptions of genius and the storms of passion. I have often wondered with admiration at these curious effects. I have seen his face lighted up by the fire of poetical inspiration, and, under the influence of strong emotions, sometimes express the highest degree of energy, and at others all the softness and grace of mild and gentle affection. When his soul was a prey to passion and revenge, it was painful to observe the powerful effect upon his features; but when, on the contrary, he was con-

quered by feelings of tenderness and benevolence (which was the natural tendency of his heart), it was delightful to contemplate his looks. I went to see Lord Byron the day after Lord Falkland's death. He had just seen the inanimate body of the man with whom, a few days before, he had spent such an agreeable time. At intervals, I heard him exclaim to himself, and half aloud, 'Poor Falkland!' His look was even more expressive than were his words. 'But his wife,' added he, 'she is to be pitied!' One could see his soul filled with the most benevolent intentions, which were sterile.* If ever pure action was done, it was that which he then meditated; and the man who conceived it, and who accomplished it, was then progressing through thorns and thistles, towards that free but narrow path which leads to heaven."

Several years later, Mr. Hoppner, English Consul at Venice, and who spent his life with Byron in that city, wrote in a narrative of the causes which created so much disgust in Byron for English travellers, that Byron's affected misanthropy, as observable in his first poems, was by no means natural to him; and he adds, that he is certain that he never met with a man so kind as Byron.

We might stop here, certain as we are that all loyal and reasonable readers are not only convinced of Byron's goodness, but experience a noble pleasure in admiring it. We cannot, however, close this chapter, without calling the attention of our readers

* Although not rich, and on the point of undertaking a long and expensive journey, he devoted a large sum to the alleviation of the wants of that family.

to the last and painful proofs given of this kindness, and goodness of Byron's nature: we allude to the extraordinary grief, caused by his death.

"Never can I forget the stupefaction," says an illustrious writer, "into which we were plunged by the news of his death. So great a part of ourselves died with him, that his death appeared to us almost impossible, and almost not natural. One would have said that a portion of the mechanism of the universe had been stopped. To have questioned him, to have blamed him, became a remorse for us, and all our veneration for his genius was not half so energetically felt as our tenderness for him.

'His last sigh dissolved the charm, the disenchanted earth
Lost all her lustre. Where her glittering towers?
Her golden mountains where? All darkened, down
To naked waste a dreary vale of years!
The great magician's dead!'—YOUNG."

Such griefs are certainly reasonable, just, and honourable: for the deaths which bury such treasures of genius are real public calamities. On hearing of Byron's death, one might repeat the beautiful and eloquent words of M. de Saint Victor:—

"What a great crime death has committed. It is something like the disappearance of a star, or the extinction of a planet, with all the creation it supposed. When great minds have accomplished their task,—like Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe,—their departure from the scene of the world leaves in the soul the sublime melancholy which presides over the setting of the sun, after it has poured out all its rays. But when we hear of the death of a Raphael, of a Mozart, and especially of Byron, struck down in their flight, just at the time when they were extend-

ing their course, we cannot refrain from calling these an eternal cause for mourning, irreparable losses, and inconsolable regrets! A genius who dies prematurely carries treasures away with him! How many ideal existences were linked with his own? what sublime thoughts vanish from his brow! what great and charming characters die with him, even before they are born! How many truths postponed, at least, for humanity!"

And we will add: to how many great and noble actions his death has put an end!

Such regrets do honour as much to those who experience them as to those who give them rise. But it is not to the enthusiasm created by his genius, nor to the grief evinced by the Greek Nation, for whom he died, that we will turn for a last proof of the goodness of his nature. Such regrets might almost be called interested,—emanating, as they do, from the knowledge of the loss of a treasure. Of the tears of the heart, which were shed for the man without his genius, shall we ask that last proof.

These are the words by which Count Gamba describes his affliction:—

"In vain should I attempt to describe the deep, the distressing sorrow that overwhelmed us all. I will not speak of myself, but of those who loved him less, because they had seen him less. Not only Mavrocordato and his immediate circle, but the whole city and all its inhabitants were, as it seemed, stunned by this blow—it had been so sudden, so unexpected. His illness, indeed, had been known; and for the three last days, none of us could walk in the streets, without anxious inquiries from every one

who met us, of 'How is my lord?' We did not mourn the loss of the great genius,—no, nor that of the supporter of Greece—our first tears were for our father, our patron, our friend. He died in a strange land, and amongst strangers: but more loved, more sincerely wept, he could never have been, wherever he had breathed his last.

"Such was the attachment, mingled with a sort of reverence and enthusiasm, with which he inspired those around him, that there was not one of us who would not, for his sake, have willingly encountered any danger in the world. The Greeks of every class and every age, from Mavrocordato to the meanest citizen, sympathised with our sorrows. It was in vain that, when we met, we tried to keep up our spirits—our attempts at consolation always ended in mutual tears."

None but beautiful souls, and those who are really thoroughly good, can be thus regretted; and heart-felt tears are only shed for those who have spent their life in drying those of others.

CHAPTER X.

QUALITIES AND VIRTUES OF SOUL.

ANTIMATERIALISM.

AMONG Lord Byron's natural qualities we may rank his antipathy, not only for anything like low sensuality or gross vice, but even for those follies to which youth and human nature are so prone. Whatever may have been said on this head, and notwithstanding the countenance Lord Byron's own words may have lent to calumnies too widely believed, it will be easy to prove the truth of our assertion. Let us examine his actions, his words (when serious), the testimony of those who knew him through life, and it will soon appear that this natural antipathy with him often attained to the height of rare virtue.

Lord Byron had a passionate nature, a feeling heart, a powerful imagination; and it cannot be denied that, after the disappointment he experienced in his ethereal love entertained at fifteen, he fell into the usual round of university life. But as he possessed great refinement of mind, never losing sight of an ideal of moral beauty, such an existence speedily became odious to him. His companions thought it all quite natural and pleasant; but he disapproved of it and blamed himself, feeling ashamed in his own conscience.

It is well known that Lord Byron never spared himself. He invented faults rather than sought to

extenuate them. And so he fully merits belief, when he happens to do himself justice. Let us attend to the following :—

"I passed my degrees in vice," he says, "very quickly, *but they were not after my taste.* For my juvenile passions, though most violent, were concentrated, and did not willingly tend to divide and expand on several objects. I could have renounced everything in the world with those I loved, or lost it all for them; but fiery though my nature was, *I could not share without disgust in the dissipation common to the place and time.*"

This makes Moore say, that even at the period to which we are alluding, his irregularities were much less sensual, much less gross and varied than those of his companions.

Nevertheless it was his boyish university life that caused Lord Byron to be suspected of drawing his own likeness, when two years later, after his return from the East, he brought out 'Childe Harold'—an imaginary hero, whom he imprudently surrounded with real circumstances personal to himself.

Moore, with his usual good sense, protests strongly against such injustice, saying that, however dissipated his college and university life might have been during the two or three years previous to his first travels, no foundation exists, except in the imagination of the poet, and the credulity or malice of the world, for such disgraceful scenes as were represented to have taken place at Newstead, by way of inferences drawn from 'Childe Harold.' "In this poem," adds Moore, "he describes the habitation of his hero as a monastic dwelling—

'condemn'd to uses vile:
Where Superstition once had made her den
Now Paphian girls were known to sing and smile.' "

These exaggerated, if not imaginary descriptions were, nevertheless, taken for serious, and literally believed by the greater part of his readers.

Moore continues: "Mr. Dallas, giving way to the same exaggerated tone, says, in speaking of the preparations for departure made by the young lord 'He was already satiated with pleasure, and disgusted with those comrades who possessed no other resource so he resolved to overcome his senses, and accordingly dismissed his harem.' The truth is, that Lord Byron did not then even possess sufficient fortune to allow himself this Oriental luxury; his manner of living at Newstead was plain and simple. His companions without being insensible to the pleasures afforded by liberal hospitality, were all too intellectual in their tastes and habits to give themselves up to vulgar debauchery. As to the allusions regarding his *Harem*, it appears certain that one or two women were suspected *subintroductæ*—to use the style of the old monks of the Abbey—but that even these belonged to the servants of the house. This is the utmost that scandal could allege as the groundwork for suspicion and accusation."

These assertions of Moore have been corroborated by many other testimonies. I will only relate that mentioned by Washington Irving, in the account of his visit to Newstead Abbey in 1830. Urged by philosophical curiosity, Washington Irving managed to get into conversation with a certain Nanny Smith who had passed all her life at Newstead as house

keeper. This old woman, after having chattered a great deal about Lord Byron and the ghosts that haunted the Abbey, asserting that though she had not seen them, she had heard them quite well, was particularly questioned by Mr. Irving as to the mode of life her young master led. She certified to his sobriety, and positively denied that he had led a licentious life at Newstead with his friends, or brought mistresses with him from London.

"Once, it is true," said the old lady, "he had a pretty *youth* for a *page* with him. The maids declared it was a young woman. But as for me, I never could verify the fact, and all these servant girls were jealous, especially one of them called Lucy. For Lord Byron being kind to her, and a fortune-teller having predicted a high destiny for her, the poor little thing dreamed of nothing else but becoming a great lady, and perhaps of rising to be mistress of the Abbey. Ah, well! but her dreams came to nothing."*

"Lord Byron," added the old lady, "passed the greater part of his time seated on his sofa reading. Sometimes he had young noblemen of his acquaintance with him. Then, it is true, they amused themselves in playing all sorts of tricks—youthful frolics, that was all; they did nothing improper for young gentlemen, nothing that could harm anybody."†

"Lord Byron's only amusements at Newstead,"

* The history of the page is, however, true. Lord Byron was then nineteen years of age. Not to give his mother the grief of seeing that he had made an acquaintance she would have disapproved, he brought Miss —— from Brighton to the Abbey, dressed as a page, that she might pass for her brother Gordon.

† See 'Newstead Abbey,' by Washington Irving.

says Mr. Irving, "were boating, boxing, fencing, and his dogs."

"His constant occupation was to write, and for that he had the habit of sitting up till two and three in the morning. Thus his life at Newstead was quite one of seclusion, entirely devoted to poetry."

After having passed a year in this way at Newstead, following on his college and university life, he left England in order to mature his mind under other skies, to forget the injustice of man and the hardships of fortune that had already somewhat tinged his nature with gloom.

Instead of going in quest of emotions, his desire was, on the contrary, to avoid both those of the heart and of the senses. The admiration felt by the young traveller for charming Spanish women and beautiful Greeks did not outstep the limits of the purest poetry. Nevertheless the stoicism of twenty, with a heart, sensibility and imagination like his, could not be very firm, nor always secure from danger. He did actually meet with a formidable enemy at Malta; for he there made acquaintance with Mrs. Spencer Smith, the daughter of one ambassador and the wife of another, a woman most fascinating from her youth, beauty, mind, and character, as well as by her singular position and strange adventures. Did he avoid her so much as the stanzas addressed to the lovely Florence, in the first canto of 'Childe Harold,' would fain imply? This may be doubted, on account of the ring which they exchanged, and also from several charming pieces of verse that testify to another sentiment.

In any case, he showed strength of mind, and that his senses were under the dominion of reason; for,

unable to secure her happiness or his own, he sought a remedy in flight.

When writing 'Childe Harold,' however, about this period, an evil genius suggested expressions, that, if taken seriously and in their literal sense, might some day furnish the weapons of accusation to his enemies. For, while acting thus towards Florence, he introduced the episode into 'Childe Harold' in a way that looks calumnious against himself:—

> "Little knew she that seeming marble heart,
> Now mask'd in silence or withheld by pride,
> Was not unskilful in the spoiler's art,
> And spreads its snares licentious far and wide;
> Nor from the base pursuit had turn'd aside,
> As long as aught was worthy to pursue."

"We have here," says Moore, "another instance of his propensity to self-misrepresentation. However great might have been the irregularities of his college life, such phrases as the 'art of the spoiler' and 'spreading snares' were in no wise applicable to them."*

Galt expresses the same certainty on this head. "Notwithstanding," says he, "the unnecessary exposure he makes of his dissipation on his first entrance into society (in the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold'), it is proved beyond *all dispute*, that at no period of his existence did Lord Byron *lead an irregular life.* That on one or two occasions he fell into some excesses, may be true; *but his habits were never those of a libertine.*"†

And after saying that the declaration by which

* Moore, vol. i., p. 346. † See Galt, 'Life of Lord Byron.'

Byron himself acknowledges his antipathy to vice carries more weight than all the rest, and that what he says of it is vague and metaphysical, he adds:—"But that only further corroborates my impression concerning him,—that is to say, that he took a sort of vanity in setting forth his experience in dissipation, but *that this dissipation never became a habit with him.*"

His true sentiments at this time are well portrayed in his letters, and especially in those addressed to his mother from Athens, when she consulted him on the conduct to be observed towards one of his tenants, a young farmer, who had behaved ill to a girl. "My opinion is," answered he, "that Mr. B—— ought to marry Miss K——. *Our first duty is not to do evil* (but, alas! that is not possible); our second duty *is to remedy it, if that be in our power.* The girl is his equal. If she were inferior to him, a sum of money and an allowance for the child might be something, —although, after all, a miserable compensation; but, under the circumstances, he ought to marry her. I will not have *gay seducers* on my estate, nor grant my farmers a privilege *I would not take myself of seducing other people's daughters.* I expect, then, this Lothario to follow my example, and begin by restoring the girl to society, or, by my father's beard, he shall hear of me."

To this letter Moore justly adds:—"The reader must not pass lightly over this letter, for there is a *vigour of moral sentiment* in it, expressed in such a plain, sincere manner, that it shows how full of health his heart was at bottom, even though it night have been scorched by passion."

Lord Byron returned to his own country, after having spent two years travelling in Spain, Portugal, and the East, in the study and contemplation requisite for maturing his genius.

His distaste for all material objects of love or passion, and, in general, for sensual pleasures, was then remarked by all those who knew him intimately.

"An anchorite," says Moore, "who knew Lord Byron about this time, could not have desired for himself greater *indifference towards all the attractions of the senses*, than Lord Byron showed at the age of twenty-three."

And as on arriving in London he met with a complication of sorrows, he could, without any great effort, remain on his guard against all seductions. He did so in reality; and Dallas assures us that, even when 'Childe Harold' appeared, he still professed positive distaste for the society of women. Whether this disposition arose from regret at the death of one he had loved, or was caused by the light conduct of other women, it is certain that he did not seek their society then; nay, even avoided them.

"I have a favour to ask you," he wrote, during this sad time, to one of his young friends: "never speak to me in your letters of a woman; make no allusion to the sex. I do not even wish to read a word about the feminine gender."

And to this same friend he wrote in verse:—

"If thou would'st hold
Place in a heart that ne'er was cold,
By all the powers that men revere,
By all unto thy bosom dear,
Thy joys below, thy hopes above,
Speak—speak of anything but love."

Newstead Abbey, October 11, 1811.

But if he did not seek after women, they came in quest of him. When he had achieved celebrity—when fame lit up his noble brow—the sex was dazzled. They did not wait to be sought, but themselves made the first advances. His table was literally strewn with expressions of feminine admiration.

Dallas relates that one day he found Lord Byron so absorbed in answering a letter that he seemed almost to have lost the consciousness of what was passing around him.

"I went to see him again next day," says he, "and Lord Byron named the person to whom he had written.

"While we were together, the page of the lady in question brought him a fresh letter. Apparently it was a young boy of thirteen or fourteen years of age, with a fresh, delicate face, that might have belonged to the *lady herself*. He was dressed in a hussar jacket, and trousers of scarlet, with silver buttons and embroidery; curls of fair hair clustered over part of the forehead and cheeks, and he held in his hand a little cap with feathers, which completed the theatrical appearance of this childish Pandarus. I could not help suspecting it was a disguise."

The suspicions were well founded, and they caused Dallas's hair to stand on end, for, added to his Puritanism, was the hope of becoming the young nobleman's Mentor, and he fancied he saw him already on the road to perdition. But was it likely that Lord Byron, with all his imagination, sensibility, and warm heart, should remain unmoved—neither touched nor flattered by the advances of persons uniting beauty and wit to the highest rank? The world talked,

commented, exaggerated. Whether actuated by jealousy, rancour, noble or despicable sentiments, all took advantage of the occasion afforded for censure.

Feminine overtures still continued to be made to Lord Byron, but the fumes of incense never hid from him the sight of his ideal. And as the comparison was not favourable to realities, disenchantment took place on his side, without a corresponding result on the other. THENCE many heart-breakings. Nevertheless there was no ill-nature, no indelicacy, none of those proceedings that the world readily forgives, but which his feelings as a man of honour would have condemned. Calantha, in despair at being no longer loved, resolved on vengeance. She invented a tale, but what does she say when the truth escapes her?

"If in his manners he (Glenarvon) had shown any of that freedom or wounding familiarity so frequent with men, she might, perhaps, have been alarmed, affrighted. But what was it she would have fled from? Certainly not gross adulation, nor those light, easy protestations to which all women, sooner or later, are accustomed; but, on the contrary, respect at once delicate and flattering; attention that sought to gratify her smallest desires; grace and gentleness that, not descending to be humble, were most fascinating, and such as are rarely to be met with," &c.

Let us now reverse the picture, and pass from shade to light: the difference is striking.

Passing in review his former life, Lord Byron said one day to Mr. Medwin:—"You may not com-

pare me to Scipio, but I can assure you that *I never seduced any woman.*"

No, certainly he did not pretend to rival Scipio; his fault was, on the contrary, that he took pleasure in appearing the reverse. And yet Lord Byron often performed actions during his short life that Scipio himself might have envied. And who knows whether in any case Scipio could have had the same merit? —for, in order to attain that, he would have required to overcome such sensibility, imagination, and heart, as were possessed by Lord Byron.

The single fact of being able to say, "I never seduced any woman," is a very great thing, and we may well doubt whether many of his detractors could say as much. But let us relate facts.

In London the mother of a beautiful girl, hard pressed for money, had recourse to Lord Byron for a large sum, making him an unnatural offer at the same time. The mother's depravity filled him with horror. Many men in his place would have been satisfied with expressing this sentiment either in words or by silence. But that was not enough for his noble heart, and he subtracted from his pleasures or his necessities a sum sufficient to save the honour of the unfortunate girl. At another time, shortly before his marriage, a charming young person, full of talent, requiring help, through some adverse family circumstances, and attracted to Lord Byron by some presentiment of his generosity, became passionately *in love* with him. She could not live without his image before her. The history of her passion is quite a romance. Utterly absorbed by it, she was for ever seeking pretexts for

seeing him. A word, a sign, was all she required to become anything he wished. But Lord Byron, aware he could not make her happy and respectable, never allowed that word to pass his lips, and his language breathed only counsels of wisdom and virtue.*

Even at Venice, when his heart had no preference, we find him saving a young girl of noble birth from the danger caused by his involuntary fascinations.† In Romagna, at Pisa, in Greece, he also gave similar proofs of virtue and of his delicate sense of honour.

Let us now examine his words. In 1813, with regard to 'The Monk,' by Lewis, which he had just read, Lord Byron wrote in his memoranda:—

"These descriptions might be written by Tiberius, at Caprera. They are overdrawn; the essence of vicious voluptuousness. As to me, I cannot conceive how they could come from the pen of a man of twenty, for Lewis was only that age when he wrote 'The Monk.' These pages are not natural; they distil cantharides.

"I had never read this work, and have just been looking over it out of sheer curiosity, from a remembrance of the noise the book made, and the name it gave Lewis. But really such things cannot even be dangerous."

About the same period Mr. Allen, a friend of Lord Holland, very learned—a perfect Magliabecchi—a devourer of books, and an observer of mankind, lent Lord Byron a quantity of unpublished letters by the poet Burns—letters that were very unfit to see the light of day, being full of oaths and obscene

* See chapter on 'Generosity.' † See 'Life in Italy.'

songs. After reading them, Lord Byron wrote his memoranda:—

"What an antithetical intelligence! Tender and harshness, refinement and vulgarity, sentim and sensuality; now soaring up into ether, and t dragging along in mud. Mire and sublimity; that is strangely blended in this admixture of spired dust. It may seem strange, but to me appears that a true voluptuary should never aban his thought to the coarseness of reality. It is c by exalting whatever terrestrial, material, phys element there is in our pleasures, by veiling th ideas, or forgetting them quite, or, at least, by ne boldly naming them to ourselves, only thus can avoid disgust."

This is how Lord Byron understood voluptu ness. We might multiply such quotations with end, taking them from every period of his life; would prove the same thing.

As to his poetry written at this time, especi the lyrical pieces where he expresses his own se ments, what can there be more chaste, more ether When a boy, he begins by consigning to the fla a whole edition of his first poems, on account c single one, which the Rev. Dr. Beecher considere expressing sentiments too warm for a young m In his famous satire, written at twenty, he bla Moore's poetry for its effeminate and Epicurean dencies, and he stigmatised as evil the whole poer 'The Ausonian Nun,' and all the sensualities contai in it. In his 'Childe Harold,' his Eastern tales, lyric poems above all, where he displays the se

ments of his own heart, everything is chaste and ethereal. The way in which the public appreciated these poems may be summed up in the words used by the Rev. Mr. Dallas—the living type of Puritanism in its most exaggerated form—at a date when, through many causes, Lord Byron no longer even enjoyed his good graces.

"After 1816," says he (the time at which Lord Byron left England), "I had no more personal intercourse with him, but I continued to read his new poems with the greatest pleasure until he brought out 'Don Juan.' That I perused with a real sorrow that no admiration could overcome. Until then his truly English muse had despised the licentious tone belonging to poets of low degree. But, in writing 'Don Juan,' he allied his *chaste and noble genius* with minds of that stamp."

And then he adds, nevertheless, that into whatsoever error Lord Byron fell, whatsoever his sin (on account of the beginning of 'Don Juan'), he did not long continue to mix his pure gold with base metal, but ceased to sully his lyre by degrees as he progressed with the poem.

Whether Dallas be right or not in speaking thus of 'Don Juan,' we do not wish here to examine. In quoting his words, my sole desire is to declare that, until the appearance of this poem, Lord Byron's muse had been, even for a Dallas, the *chaste muse of Albion.* This avowal from such a man is worthy of note, and renders unnecessary any other quotation.

We must not, however, pass over in silence Mr. Galt's very remarkable opinion on this subject:—

"Certainly," says he, "there are some very fine

compositions on love in Lord Byron's works, but there is not a *single line* among the thousand he wrote which shows a *sexual* sentiment. With him, all breathes the *purest* voluptuousness. All is vague as regards love, and *without material passion*, except in the delicious rhythm of his verses."

And elsewhere he says :—

"It is most singular that, with all his tender, passionate apostrophes to love, Lord Byron *should not once have associated it with sensual images.* Not even in 'Don Juan,' where he has described voluptuous beauties with so much elegance."

Then, quoting from 'Hebrew Melodies,'—

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that 's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

"Behold in these charming lines," continues Galt, "a perfect sample of his *ethereal admiration*, his *immaterial* enthusiasm.

"The sentiment contained in this fine poetry," says

he, "beyond all doubt belongs to the highest order of intellectual beauty;" and it seemed proved to him that love, in Lord Byron, was rather a metaphysical conception than a sensual passion. He remarked that even when Lord Byron recalls the precocious feelings of his childhood towards his little cousins—feelings so strong as to make him lose sleep, appetite, peace; when he describes them, still unable to explain them —we feel that they were passions much more ethereal with him than with children in general.

"It should be duly remarked," says Galt, "that there is not a single circumstance in his souvenirs which shows, despite the strength of their natural sympathy, the smallest influence of any particular attraction. He recollects well the colour of her hair, the shade of her eyes, even the dress she wore, but he remembers his little Mary as if she were a Peri, a pure spirit; and it does not appear that his torments and his wakefulness haunted with the thought of his little cousin, were in any way produced by jealousy, or doubt, or fears, or any other consequence of passion."

And when Galt speaks of 'Tasso's Lament,' he expresses the same opinion, namely, that in his writings Lord Byron treats of love as of a metaphysical conception, and that the fine verses he has put into the mouth of Tasso, would still better become himself:—

"It is no marvel—from my very birth
My soul was drunk with love, which did pervade
And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth:
Of objects all inanimate I made
Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers,
And rocks, whereby they grew, a Paradise,
Where I did lay me down within the shade
Of waving trees, and dream'd uncounted hours."

"The truth is," adds Galt, by way of conclusion, "that no poet has ever described love better than Lord Byron in that particular *ethereal* shade:—

> "'His love was passion's essence:—as a tree
> On fire by lightning, with ethereal flame
> Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be
> Thus, and enamour'd, were in him the same.
> But his was not the love of living dame,
> Nor of the dead who rise upon our dreams,
> But of ideal beauty, which became
> In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
> Along his burning page, distemper'd though it seems.'"
>
> 'Childe Harold,' canto iii., stanza 78.

And even if it should be denied that love, in Lord Byron's writings, as indeed in himself, was purely metaphysical, it must, at least, be acknowledged that it was chaste. This would be more easily recognisable if the letters dictated by his heart, if his *love-letters*, were known. But since we cannot open these intimate treasures of his heart to the public, we will speak of those given us in his writings, and we will thence draw our conclusions: firstly, in regard to the characters he gives to all his heroines; secondly, as to the pictures he makes of love in passages where he speaks seriously, and in his own name.

LORD BYRON'S FEMALE CHARACTERS.

What poet of energy has ever painted woman more chaste, more gentle and sweet than Lord Byron?

"One of the distinguishing excellences of Lord Byron," says one of his best critics, "is that which may be found in all his productions, whether romantic, classical, or fantastical, an intense sentiment of the

loveliness of woman, and the faculty, not only of drawing individual forms, but likewise of infusing into the very atmosphere surrounding them, the essence of beauty and love. A soft roseate hue, that seems to penetrate down to the bottom of the soul, is spread over them."

More than any other genius, Lord Byron had the magic power of conjuring up before our imagination the ideal image of his subject. He was not at all perplexed how to clothe his ideas. That quality, so sought after by other writers, and so necessary for hiding faults, was quite natural to him. When he describes women, a few rapid strokes suffice to engrave an indelible image on the mind of the reader. Let us take for examples:—

Leila, in the 'Giaour.'
Zuleika, in the 'Bride of Abydos.'
Medora, in the 'Corsair.'
Theresa, in 'Mazeppa.'
Haidée, in 'Don Juan.'
Adah, in 'Cain.'

The gentle Medora, ensconced within the solitary tower where she awaits her Conrad, is fully portrayed in the melancholy song stealing on the strings of her guitar, and in the tender, chaste words with which she greets her lover.

Zuleika, the lovely, innocent, and pure bride of Selim, has her image graven in the following fine lines:—

"Fair, as the first that fell of womankind,
When on that dread yet lovely serpent smiling,
Whose image then was stamp'd upon her mind—
But once beguiled—and evermore beguiling;

Dazzling, as that, oh! too transcendent vision
To Sorrow's phantom-peopled slumber given,
When heart meets heart again in dreams Elysian,
And paints the lost on Earth revived in Heaven;
Soft as the memory of buried love;
Pure, as the prayer which Childhood wafts above,
Was she—the daughter of that rude old Chief,
Who met the maid with tears—but not of grief.

"Who hath not proved how feebly words essay
To fix one spark of Beauty's heavenly ray?
Who doth not feel, until his failing sight
Faints into dimness with its own delight,
His changing cheek, his sinking heart confess
The might, the majesty of Loveliness?
Such was Zuleika, such around her shone
The nameless charms unmark'd by her alone—
The light of love, the purity of grace,
The mind, the Music breathing from her face,
The heart whose softness harmonized the whole,
And, oh! that eye was in itself a Soul!

Her graceful arms in meekness bending
Across her gently-budding breast;
At one kind word those arms extending
To clasp the neck of him who blest
His child, caressing and carest." *

THERESA.

"Theresa's form—
Methinks it glides before me now,
Between me and yon chestnut's bough,
The memory is so quick, and warm;
And yet I find no words to tell
The shape of her I loved so well;
She had the Asiatic eye,
Such as our Turkish neighbourhood
Hath mingled with our Polish blood,
Dark as above us is the sky;

---

* The heroism of the young Zuleika, says Mr. G. Ellis in his criticism, is full of purity and loveliness. Never was a more perfect character traced with greater delicacy and truth; her piety, intelligence, her exquisite sentiment of duty and her unalterable love of truth seem born in her soul rather than acquired by education. She is ever natural, seductive, affectionate, and we must confess that her affection for Selim is well placed.

But through it stole a tender light,
Like the first moonrise of midnight;
Large, dark, and swimming in the stream,
Which seem'd to melt to its own beam;
All love, half languor, and half fire,
Like saints that at the stake expire,
And lift their raptured looks on high,
As though it were a joy to die.
A brow like a midsummer lake,
Transparent with the sun therein,
When waves no murmur dare to make,
And heaven beholds her face within.
A cheek and lip—but why proceed?
I loved her then, I love her still;
And such as I am, love indeed
In fierce extremes—in good and ill."

LEILA.

"Her eye's dark charm 't were vain to tell,
But gaze on that of the Gazelle,
It will assist thy fancy well;
As large, as languishingly dark,
But Soul beam'd forth in every spark
That darted from beneath the lid,
Bright as the jewel of Giamschid.
Yea, *Soul*, and should our Prophet say
That form was nought but breathing clay,
By Allah! I would answer nay;
Though on Al-Sirat's arch I stood,
Which totters o'er the fiery flood,
With Paradise within my view,
And all his Houris beckoning through.
Oh! who young Leila's glance could read
And keep that portion of his creed
Which saith that woman is but dust,
A soulless toy for tyrant's lust?
On her might Muftis gaze, and own
That through her eye the Immortal shone;
On her fair cheek's unfading hue
The young pomegranate's blossoms strew
Their bloom in blushes ever new;
Her hair in hyacinthine flow,
When left to roll its folds below,
As midst her handmaids in the hall
She stood superior to them all,

Hath swept the marble where her feet
Gleam'd whiter than the mountain sleet
Ere from the cloud that gave it birth
It fell, and caught one stain of earth.
The cygnet nobly walks the water;
So moved on earth Circassia's daughter—
The loveliest bird of Frangnestan!
As rears her crest the ruffled Swan,
And spurns the waves with wings of pride,
When pass the steps of stranger man
Along the banks that bound her tide;
Thus rose fair Leila's whiter neck:—
Thus arm'd with beauty would she check
Intrusion's glance, till Folly's gaze
Shrunk from the charms it meant to praise.
Thus high and graceful was her gait;
Her heart as tender to her mate;
Her mate—stern Hassan, who was he?
Alas! that name was not for thee!"

ADAH.

Adah is the wife of Cain. It is especially as the drama developes itself that Lord Byron brings out the full charm of Adah's beautiful nature—a nature at once primitive, tender, generous, and Biblical.

"CAIN.

"*Lucifer.* Approach the things of earth most beautiful,
And judge their beauty near.
Cain. I have done this—
The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest.
Lucifer. What is that?

* * *

Cain. My sister Adah.—All the stars of heaven,
The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb
Which looks a spirit, or a spirit's world—
The hues of twilight—the sun's gorgeous coming—
His setting indescribable, which fills
My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold
Him sink, and feel my heart float softly with him
Along that western paradise of clouds—
The forest shade—the green bough—the bird's voice—
The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,
And mingles with the song of cherubim,

As the day closes over Eden's walls:—
All these are nothing, to my eyes and heart,
Like Adah's face: I turn from earth and heaven
To gaze on it."

Even those charming children of Nature, Haidée and Dudù, in 'Don Juan,' and the Neuha, in 'The Island,' scarcely meant to represent more than the visible material part of the ideal woman he could love if he met with her — even these charming creatures possess not only the pagan beauty of form, but also Christian beauty, that of the soul: goodness, gentleness, tenderness. And it is also to be remarked, that by degrees, as time wore on, Lord Byron's female types rose in the moral scale, while still preserving their adorable charms, and their harmony with the state of civilisation wherein he placed them. For instance, his Haidée, in the second canto of 'Don Juan,' written at Venice in 1818, is not worth, morally, the Haidée of the fourth canto, written at Ravenna in 1820. Beneath his pen at Ravenna, the adorable maiden evidently becomes spiritualised. This may be attributed to the poet's state of mind, for he was quite different at Ravenna to what he had been at Venice. The portrait of this lovely child is certainly very charming in 1818, but, while admiring her spotless Grecian brow, her beautiful hair, large Eastern eyes, and noble mouth, we cannot help remarking something vague and undecided about her. And even in those fine verses where he says that Haidée's face belongs to a type inconceivable for human thought, and still more impossible of execution for mortal chisel, it is still the beauty of form that he shows you; while the Haidée of Ravenna is quite spiritualised in all her exquisite beauty.

After having described her as she appeared in her delicious Eastern costume, Lord Byron expresses himself in these terms:—

"Her hair's long auburn waves down to her heel
Flow'd like an alpine torrent, which the sun
Dyes with his morning light,—and would conceal
Her person if allow'd at large to run;
And still they seem'd resentfully to feel
The silken fillet's curb, and sought to shun
Their bonds, whene'er some Zephyr, caught, began
To offer his young pinion as her fan.

"Round her she made an atmosphere of life,
The very air seem'd lighter from her eyes,
They were so soft and beautiful, and rife
With all we can imagine of the skies,
And pure as Psyche ere she grew a wife—
Too pure even for the purest human ties;
Her overpowering presence made you feel
It would not be idolatry to kneel."

And, describing the whiteness of her skin, he says:—

"Day ne'er will break
On mountain-tops more heavenly white than her;
The eye might doubt of it were well awake,
She was so like a vision."

In the sixth canto of 'Don Juan'—the hero being in the midst of a harem—all his sympathies are for Dudù, a beautiful Circassian, who unites to all the charms, all the moral qualities that a slave of the harem might possess. This is the portrait which Lord Byron draws:—

XLII.

"A kind of sleepy Venus seem'd Dudù,
Yet very fit to 'murder sleep' in those
Who gazed upon her cheek's transcendent hue,
Her Attic forehead and her Phidian nose.

* * * *

XLIII.

"She was not violently lively, but
Stole on your spirit like a May-day breaking.

* * * *

LII.

"Dudù, as has been said, was a sweet creature,
Not very dashing, but extremely winning,
With the most regulated charms of feature,
Which painters cannot catch like faces sinning
Against proportion—the wild strokes of nature
Which they hit off at once in the beginning,
Full of expression, right or wrong, that strike,
And, pleasing or unpleasing, still are like.

LIII.

"But she was a soft landscape of mild earth,
Where all was harmony, and calm, and quiet,
Luxuriant, budding; cheerful without mirth,
Which, if not happiness, is much more nigh it
Than are your mighty passions and so forth,
Which some call 'the sublime:' I wish they'd try it:
I've seen your stormy seas and stormy women,
And pity lovers rather more than seamen.

LIV.

"But she was pensive more than melancholy,
And serious more than pensive, and serene,
It may be more, than either: not unholy
Her thoughts, at least till now, appear to have been.
The strangest thing was, beauteous, she was wholly
Unconscious, albeit turn'd of quick seventeen,
That she was fair, or dark, or short, or tall;
She never thought about herself at all.

LV.

"And therefore was she kind and gentle as
The Age of Gold (when gold was yet unknown)."

As to Neuha, the daughter of Ocean (in 'The Island'), his last creation, she is, indeed, the daughter of Nature also, and no less admirable than her sister

Haidée, but she is still more highly endowed moral sense:—

"The infant of an infant world, as pure
From nature—lovely, warm, and premature;
Dusky like night, but night with all her stars,
Or cavern sparkling with its native spars;
With eyes that were a language and a spell,
A form like Aphrodite's in her shell,
With all her loves around her on the deep,
Voluptuous as the first approach of sleep;
Yet full of life—for through her tropic cheek
The blush would make its way, and all but speak:
The sun-born blood suffused her neck, and threw
O'er her clear nut-brown skin a lucid hue,
Like coral reddening through the darken'd wave,
Which draws the diver to the crimson cave.
Such was this daughter of the southern seas,
Herself a billow in her energies,
To bear the bark of others' happiness,
Nor feel a sorrow till their joy grew less:
Her wild and warm yet faithful bosom knew
No joy like what it gave; her hopes ne'er drew
Aught from experience, that chill touchstone, whose
Sad proof reduces all things from their hues:
She fear'd no ill, because she knew it not."

When, after the combat, she arrives in her ba save Torquil, the poet exclaims:—

"And who the first that, springing on the strand,
Leap'd like a nereid from her shell to land,
With dark but brilliant skin, and dewy eye
Shining with love, and hope, and constancy?
Neuha—the fond, the faithful, the adored—
Her heart on Torquil's like a torrent poured;
And smiled, and wept, and near, and nearer clasp'd,
As if to be assured 'twas *him* she grasp'd;
Shuddered to see his yet warm wound, and then,
To find it trivial, smiled and wept again.
She was a warrior's daughter, and could bear
Such sights, and feel, and mourn, but not despair.
Her lover lived,—nor foes nor fears could blight,
That full-blown moment in its all delight:

Joy trickled in her tears, joy filled the sob
That rock'd her heart till almost heard to throb;
And paradise was breathing in the sigh
Of nature's child in nature's ecstasy."

"All these sweet creations realise the idea, formed from all time, of surpassing loveliness, of gentleness with passion," justly observes Monsieur Nisard—he who, in his very clever sketch of the illustrious poet, so often forms erroneous judgments of Lord Byron. For he also accepted him as he was presented—namely, as the victim of calumny and prejudice; or else he considered him after a system, examining only some *passages and one single period* of the man's and the *poet's* life, instead of taking the whole career and the general spirit of his writings,—a method also perceivable in his appreciation of Lord Byron's female characters.

Indeed Monsieur Nisard evidently only speaks of the Medoras, Zuleikas, Leilas, and in general of all the types in his Eastern poems, and appertaining to his first period: most fascinating beings undoubtedly, true emanations of the purest and most passionate love, but yet as morally inferior to the Angiolinas, Myrrhas, Josephines, Auroras, as his poems of the first period are intellectually inferior to those of the second, beginning with the third canto of 'Childe Harold,' and as civilised Christian woman is superior to a woman in the harem. But Monsieur Nisard, who has a very systematic way of judging things—wishing to prove that Lord Byron's loves were quite lawless in their ungovernable strength, filling the whole soul to the absorption of every other sentiment and interest (which might, indeed, perhaps be said of the personages in his Eastern poems), and not able,

without contradicting himself, to assert the same as regards the love and devotion shown by the heroic Myrrhas and virtuous Angiolinas, and other dramatic types, all so different one from the other—has been obliged to omit all mention of them, thus sharing an error common to vain, ignorant critics. Yet these delightful creatures all resemble each other in the one faculty of *loving passionately and chastely*, for that is a quality which constitutes the very essence of woman, and Lord Byron's own qualities must always have drawn it out in her. But there is something far beyond beauty and passion in these noble and heroic creations of his second manner.

"Where shall we find," says Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, "a purer, higher character than that of Angiolina, in the 'Doge of Venice'? Among all Shakspeare's female characters there is certainly not one more true, and not only true and natural, which would be but slight merit, but true as a type of the highest, rarest order in human nature. Let us stop here for a moment, we are on no common ground; the character of Angiolina has not yet been understood."

Bulwer then quotes the scene between Marian and Angiolina, and after having pointed out its moral beauty, exclaims:—

"What a deep sentiment of the dignity of virtue! Angiolina does not even conceive that she can be suspected, or that the insult offered her required any other justification than the indignation of public opinion."

And Bulwer goes on to quote the verses where Marian asks Angiolina if, when she gave her hand to

a man of age so disproportioned, and of a character so opposite to her own, she loved this spouse, this friend of her family; and whether, before marriage, her heart had not beat for some noble youth more worthy to be the husband of beauty like hers; or whether since, she had not met with some one who might have aspired to her lovely self. And after Angiolina's admirable reply, Bulwer says:—

"Is not this conception equal at least to that of Desdemona? Is not her heart equally pure, serene, tender, and at the same time passionate, yet with love, not material but *actual*, which, according to Plato, gives a visible form to virtue, and then admits of no other rival. Yet this sublime noble woman had no cold stiffness in her nature; she forgives Steno, but not from the cold height of her chastity.

"'If,' said she to the indignant page, 'oh! if this false and light calumniator were to shed his blood on account of this absurd calumny, never from that moment would my heart experience an hour's happiness, nor enjoy a tranquil slumber.'"

"Here," says Bulwer, "the reader should remark with what delicate artifice the tenderness of sex and charity heighten and warm the snowy coldness of her ethereal superiority. What a union of all woman's finest qualities! Pride that disdains calumny; gentleness that forgives it! Nothing can be more simply grand than the whole of this character, and the story which enhances it. An old man of eighty is the husband of a young woman, whose heart preserves the calmness of purity; no love episode comes to disturb her serene course, no impure, dishonourable

jealousy casts a shade on her bright name. She treads her path through a life of difficulties, like some angelic nature, though quite human by the form she wears."

Wishing only to call attention to the beauty of the female characters he created, without reference to the other beauties contained in the work, we shall continue to quote Bulwer for the second of these admirable creations of womankind in his dramas, namely Myrrha. After having praised that magnificent tragedy 'Sardanapalus,' he adds:—

"But the principal beauty of this drama is the conception of Myrrha. This young Greek slave, so tender and courageous, in love with her lord and master, yet sighing after her liberty; adoring equally her natal land and the gentle barbarian: what a new and dramatic combination of sentiments! It is in this conflict of emotions that the master's hand shows itself with happiest triumph.

"The heroism of this beautiful Ionian never goes beyond nature, yet stops only at sublimest limits. The proud melancholy that blends with her character, when she thinks of her fatherland; her ardent, generous, *unselfish* love, her passionate desire of elevating the soul of Sardanapalus, so as to justify her devotion to him, the earnest yet sweet severity that reigned over her gentlest qualities, showing her faithful and fearless, capable of sustaining with a firm hand the torch that was to consume on the sacred pile (according to her religion) both Assyrian and Greek; all these combinations are the result of the purest sentiments, the noblest art. The last words of Myrrha on the funereal pyre are in good

keeping with the grand conception of her character. With the natural aspirations of a Greek, her thoughts turn at this moment to her distant clime; but still they come back at the same time to her lord, who is beside her, and blending almost in one sigh the two contrary affections of her soul, Myrrha cries:—

"Then farewell, thou earth!
And loveliest spot of earth! farewell, Ionia!
Be thou still free and beautiful, and far
Aloof from desolation! My last prayer
Was for thee, my last thoughts, save *one*, were of thee!
Sar. And that?
Myr. Is yours."

"The principal charm," says Moore, "and the life-giving angel of this tragedy, is Myrrha, a beautiful, heroic, devoted, ethereal creature, enamoured of the generous, infatuated monarch, yet ashamed of loving a barbarian, and using all her influence over him to elevate as well as gild his life, and to arm him against the terror of his end. Her voluptuousness is that of the heart, her heroism that of the affections."

Another admirable character, full of Christian beauty, is that of Josephine in 'Werner.'

"Josephine," said the 'Review,' when 'Werner' appeared, "is a model of real spotless virtue. A true woman in her perfection, not only does she preserve the character of her sex by her general integrity, but she also possesses a wife's tender, sweet, and constant affection. She cherishes and consoles her afflicted husband through all the adversities of his destiny and the consequences of his faults.

"Italian by birth, the contrast between the beauties and circumstances of her native country compared with the frontiers of Silesia, where a petty feudal

tyranny exists, displays still more the fine sentiments that characterize her."

We shall close this long list of admirable conceptions (which one quits with regret, so great is their charm) by giving some extracts from the portrait he was engaged on, when death, alas! caused the pencil to drop from his fingers: we mean Aurora Raby in 'Don Juan':—

"Aurora Raby, a young star who shone
O'er life, too sweet an image for such glass;
A lovely being, scarcely form'd or moulded,
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded;
* * * *
"Early in years, and yet more infantine
In figure, she had something of sublime
In eyes which sadly shone, as seraphs' shine.
All youth—but with an aspect beyond time;
Radiant and grave—as pitying man's decline;
Mournful—but mournful of another's crime,
She look'd as if she sat by Eden's door,
And grieved for those who could return no more."

And then:—

"She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allow'd."

And again:—

"She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,
As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
And kept her heart serene within its zone.
There was awe in the homage which she drew:
Her spirit seem'd as seated on a throne
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong
In its own strength—most strange in one so young!"
* * * *
"High, yet resembling not his lost Haidée;
Yet each was radiant in her proper sphere."
* * * *
"The difference in them
Was such as lies between a flower and gem."

'Don Juan,' canto XV.

Now that we have seen Lord Byron's ideal of womankind, let us mark with what sentiments they inspired him, and in what way love always presented itself to his heart or his imagination. Ever dealing out towards him the same measure of justice and truth, people have gone on complacently repeating that his love sometimes became a very frenzy, or anon degenerated into a sensation rather than a sentiment. And his poetry has been asserted to contain proof of this in the actions, characters, and words of the persons there portrayed. I think, then, that the best way of ascertaining the degree of truth belonging to these asseverations, is to let him speak himself, on this sentiment, at all the different periods of his life :—

"Yes, Love indeed is light from heaven;
A spark of that immortal fire
With angels shared, by Allah given
To lift from earth our low desire.
Devotion wafts the mind above,
But Heaven itself descends in love;
A feeling from the Godhead caught,
To wean from self each sordid thought;
A Ray of Him who form'd the whole;
A Glory circling round the soul!
I grant *my* love imperfect, all
That mortals by the name miscall;
Then deem it evil, what thou wilt;
But say, oh say, *hers* was not guilt!
She was my life's unerring light:
That quench'd, what beam shall break my night?"

'The Giaour.'

In 1817, at Venice, when his heart, at twenty-nine years of age, was devoid of any real love, and had even arrived at never loving, although suffering deeply from the void thus created, Lord Byron giving vent to his feelings wrote thus :—

"Oh! that the Desert were my dwelling-place,
With one fair Spirit for my minister,
That I might all forget the human race,
And, hating no one, love but only her!
Ye elements!—in whose ennobling stir
I feel myself exalted—Can ye not
Accord me such a being? Do I err
In deeming such inhabit many a spot?
Though with them to converse can rarely be our lot." *

At the same period, he also unveils his soul, in guessing that of Tasso:—

"And with my years my soul began to pant
With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain;
And the whole heart exhaled into One Want,
But undefined and wandering, till the day
I found the thing I sought—and that was thee;
And then I lost my being, all to be
Absorb'd in thine; the world was pass'd away;
Thou didst annihilate the earth to me!"

'The Lament of Tasso.'

A short time after, having described the charm of a pine forest at Ravenna, seen by twilight, he begins to paint the happiness of two loving hearts—of Juan and Haidée, and says:—

VIII.

"Young Juan and his lady-love were left
To their own hearts' most sweet society;
Even Time the pitiless in sorrow cleft
With his rude scythe such gentle bosoms.
* * * *
They could not be
Meant to grow old, but die in happy spring,
Before one charm or hope had taken wing.

IX.

"Their faces were not made for wrinkles, their
Pure blood to stagnate, their great hearts to fail;
The blank grey was not made to blast their hair,
But like the climes that know nor snow nor hail,

* 'Childe Harold,' canto iv., stanza 177.

They were all summer; lightning might assail
And shiver them to ashes, but to trail
A long and snake-like life of dull decay
Was not for them—they had too little clay.

X.

"They were alone once more; for them to be
Thus was another Eden; they were never
Weary, unless when separate: the tree
Cut from its forest root of years—the river
Damm'd from its fountain—the child from the knee
And breast maternal wean'd at once for ever,—
Would wither less than these two torn apart;
Alas! there is no instinct like the heart.

XII.

"'Whom the gods love die young' was said of yore,
And many deaths do they escape by this:
The death of friends, and that which slays even more—
The death of friendship, love, youth, all that is,
Except mere breath;

* * * *

Perhaps the early grave
Which men weep over, may be meant to save.

XIII.

"Haidée and Juan thought not of the dead.
The heavens, and earth, and air, seem'd made for them:
They found no fault with Time, save that he fled;
They saw not in themselves aught to condemn;
Each was the other's mirror.

* * * *

XVI.

"Moons changing had roll'd on, and changeless found
Those their bright rise had lighted to such joys
As rarely they beheld throughout their round;
And these were not of the vain kind which cloys,
For theirs were buoyant spirits, never bound
By the mere senses; and that which destroys
Most love, possession, unto them appear'd
A thing which each endearment more endear'd,

XVII.

"Oh beautiful! and rare as beautiful!
But theirs was love in which the mind delights
To lose itself, when the old world grows dull,
And we are sick of its hack sounds and sights,
Intrigues, adventures of the common school,
Its petty passions, marriages, and flights,
Where Hymen's torch but brands one strumpet more,
Whose husband only knows her not a wh—re.

XVIII.

"Hard words; harsh truth; a truth which many know.
Enough.—The faithful and the fairy pair,
Who never found a single hour too slow,
What was it made them thus exempt from care?
Young innate feelings all have felt below,
Which perish in the rest, but in them were
Inherent; what we mortals call romantic,
And always envy, though we deem it frantic.

XIX.

"This is in others a factitious state,
* * * *
But was in them their nature or their fate.
* * * *

XX.

"They gazed upon the sunset: 't is an hour
Dear unto all, but dearest to *their* eyes,
For it had made them what they were: the power
Of love had first o'erwhelm'd them from such skies,
When happiness had been their only dower,
And twilight saw them link'd in passion's ties;
Charm'd with each other, all things charm'd that brought
The past still welcome as the present thought.
* * * *

XXVI.

"Juan and Haidée gazed upon each other
With swimming looks of speechless tenderness,
Which mix'd all feelings, friend, child, lover, brother;
All that the best can mingle and express
When two pure hearts are pour'd in one another,
And love too much, and yet can not love less;
But almost sanctify the sweet excess
By the immortal wish and power to bless.

XXVII.

"Mix'd in each other's arms, and heart in heart,
Why did they not then die?—they had lived too long
Should an hour come to bid them breathe apart;
Years could but bring them cruel things or wrong."

'Don Juan,' canto iv.

It was this love which caused Campbell the poet to say:—

"If the love of Juan and Haidée is not pure and innocent, and expressed with delicacy and propriety, then may we at once condemn and blot out this tender passion of the soul from the list of a poet's themes. Then must we shut our eyes and harden our hearts against that passion which sways our whole existence, and quite become mere creatures of hypocrisy and formality, and accuse Milton himself of madness."

At Ravenna, where Lord Byron composed so many sublime works, he also wrote 'Sardanapalus' and 'Heaven and Earth.' He was then thirty-two years of age. The love predominating in these two dramas is that which swayed his own soul, the same sentiment which, a year later, also inspired the beautiful poem composed on his way from Ravenna to Pisa.

No quotation could convey an idea of the noble energetic feeling animating these two dramas, for adequate language is wanting; impervious to words, the sentiment they contain is like a spirit pervading, or a ray of light warming and illuminating them.

They require to be read throughout. I prefer to quote his words on love, in the 16th canto of 'Don Juan,' and in 'The Island,' because they are the last traced by his pen. Written a few days previous to his fatal departure for Greece, it cannot be doubted

that the sentiment which dictated them was the s
that accompanied him to his last hour.

CVII.

* * * *

"And certainly Aurora had renew'd
In him some feelings he had lately lost,
Or inurn'd: feelings which, perhaps ideal,
Are as divine, that I must deem them real:—

CVIII.

"The love of higher things and better days;
The unbounded hope, and heavenly ignorance
Of what is call'd the world, and the world's ways;
The moments when we gather from a glance
More joy than from all future pride or praise,
Which kindle manhood, but can ne'er entrance
The heart in an existence of its own,
Of which another's bosom is the zone."*

And then, in describing the happiness of lovers, in his poem of 'The Island,' a few days bef setting out for Greece, he says again: —

"Like martyrs revel in their funeral pyre,
With such devotion to their ecstasy,
That life knows no such rapture as to die;
And die they do: for earthly life has nought
Match'd with that burst of nature, even in thought:
And all our dreams of better life above
But close in one eternal gush of love."

After speaking of the religious enthusiast, saying that his soul preceded his dust to heaven, adds:—

"Is love less potent? No—his path is trod,
Alike uplifted gloriously to God;
Or link'd to all we know of heaven below,
The other better self, whose joy or woe
Is more than ours."

But enough of quotations, and now what poet

* See 'Don Juan,' canto xvi.

ever written or spoken of love with words and images more chaste, more truly welling from his own heart? We feel that he has given us the key to that. And if, after all these demonstrations, there still remain any readers who continue to accept as true the pleasantries, satires, and mystifications contained in some of his verses, I do not pretend to write for them. They are to be pitied, but there is no hope of convincing them. That depends on their quality of mind. The only thing possible, then, is to recall some of those anecdotes which, while justifying them in a measure, yet at the same time illustrate Lord Byron's way of acting. I will select one. When Lord Byron was at Pisa a friend of Shelley's, whom he sometimes saw, had formed a close intimacy with Lady B——, a woman of middle-age but of high birth. The tie between them was evidently the result of vanity on Mr. M——'s side, and, as she was the mother of a large family, it was doubly imperative on her to be respectable. But that did not prevent Mr. M—— from boasting of his success, and even (that he might be believed) from going into disgusting details in his eagerness for praise.

One day that Mr. M—— was in the same *salon* (at Mrs. Sh——'s house) with Lord Byron and the Countess G——, the conversation turned upon women and love in general, whereupon Mr. M—— lauded to the skies the devotedness, constancy, and truth of the sex. When he had finished his sentimental "tirade," Lord Byron took up the opposite side, going on as Don Juan or Childe Harold might. It was easy to see he was playing a part, and that his words, partly in jest, partly ironical, did not express his

thoughts. Nevertheless they gave pain to Mme. G——, and, as soon as they were alone, Lord Byron having asked her why she was sad, she told him the cause.

"I am very sorry to have grieved you," said he, but how could you think that I was talking seriously?"

"I did not think it," she said, "but those who do not know you will believe all; M—— will not fail to repeat your words as if they were your real opinions; and the world, knowing neither him nor you, will remain convinced that he is a man full of noble sentiments, and you a real Don Juan, not indeed your own charming youth, but Molière's Don Juan!"

"Very probably," said Lord Byron; "and that will be another true page to add to M——'s note-book. I can't help it. I couldn't resist the temptation of punishing M—— for his vanity. All those eulogiums and sentimentalities about women were to make us believe how charming they had always been towards him, how they had always appreciated his merits, and how passionately in love with him Lady B—— now is. My words were meant to throw water on his imaginary fire."

Alas! it was on such false appearances that they made up, then and since, the Lord Byron still believed in by the generality of persons.

Lord Byron by his marriage gave another pledge of having renounced the foibles of the heart and the allurements of the senses; and it is very certain that he redeemed his word. If, through susceptibility or any other defect, Lady Byron, going back to the past or trusting to vile, revengeful, and interested spies, did not know how to understand him, all Lord

Byron's friends did, whether or not they dared to say so. And he himself, who never could tell a lie, has assured us of his married fidelity.* His life in Switzerland was devoted to study, retreat, and even austerity. How little this stood him in stead with his enemies is well known. "I never lived in a more edifying manner than at Geneva," he said to Mr. Medwin. "My reputation has not gained by it. Nevertheless, when there is mortification, there ought to be a reward." †

When he arrived at Milan many ladies belonging to the great world were most anxious to know him; these presentations were proposed to him, and he refused. As to his life at Venice, a wicked sort of romance has been made of it, by exaggerating most ordinary things, and heaping invention upon invention; but this has been explained with sufficient detail in another chapter, where all the different causes of these exaggerations have been shown in their just measure of truth.‡

Here, then, I will only say, that if, on arriving at Venice, he relaxed his austerity to lead the life common to young men without legitimate ties; if, under the influence of that lovely sky, he did not remain insensible to the songs of the beautiful Adriatic siren, nor trample under foot the few flowers fate scattered on his path, to make amends perhaps for the thorns that had so long beset it; if he sometimes accepted distractions in the form of light pleasures, as well as in the form of study,§ did he not likewise always impose hard laborious occupation upon his mind, thus chaining it to beautiful imma-

* See on Marriage. † Medwin, p. 13. ‡ See 'Life in Italy.'
§ Ibid.

terial things? Did his intellectual activity slacken? Was his soul less energetic, less sublime? The works of genius that issued from his pen at Venice are a sufficient reply. 'Manfred,' conceived on the summit of the Alps, was written at Venice; the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold' was conceived and written at Venice. The 'Lament of Tasso,' 'Mazeppa,' the 'Ode to Venice,' 'Beppo' (from his studies of Berni), the first two cantos of 'Don Juan,' were all written at Venice.

Moreover, it was there he collected materials for his dramas; there he studied the Armenian language, making sufficient progress to translate St. Paul's Epistles into English. And all that, in less than twenty-six months, including his journeys to Rome and to Florence. Let moralists say whether a man steeped in sensual pleasures could have done all that.

"The truth is," says Moore, "that, so far from the strength of his intellect being impaired or dissipated by these irregularities, it never was perhaps at any period of his life more than at Venice in full possession of all its energies." *

All the concessions Moore was obliged to make, from a sort of weakness, not to compromise his position, to certain extreme opinions in politics or religion, cloaking in reality personal hatred; are they not all destroyed by this single avowal?

Shelley, who came to Venice to see Lord Byron, said that all he observed of Lord Byron's state during his visit gave him a much higher idea of his intellectual grandeur than what he had noticed before. Then it was, and under this impression, that Shelley

* Moore, vol. ii. p. 182.

sketched almost the whole poem of 'Julian and Maddalo.' "It is in this latter character," says Moore, "that he has so picturesquely personated his noble friend; his allusions to the 'Swan of Albion,' in the verses written on the Engancennes hills, are also the result of this fit of enthusiastic admiration." At Venice Lord Byron saw few English; but those he did see, and who have spoken of him, have expressed themselves in the same way as Shelley; which caused Galt to say, that even at Venice, with regard to his pleasures, his conduct had been that of most young men! but that the whole difference must have consisted in the extravagant delight he took in exaggerating, through his conversation, not what was conducive to honour, but, on the contrary, what was likely to do him harm. The whole difference, however, does not lie here, but rather in the indiscretion shown by some friends.* Amongst the best testimonies borne to his way of living at Venice we must not forget that of Hoppner, who bore so high a character, and who was the constant companion of his daily afternoon walks; nor that of the excellent Father Pascal, who shared his morning studies at the Armenian convent.†

But in this united homage to truth I cannot pass over in silence nor refrain from quoting the words of a very great mind, who, under the veil of fiction, has written almost a biography of Lord Byron, and who too independent, *though a Tory*, to *wish* to conceal his thought, has declared in the preface to his charming work of 'Venetia' that Lord Byron was really his hero.

* See 'Life in Italy,' at Venice.

† See 'Life in Italy.'

This writer, after speaking of all the silly calumnies with which Lord Byron was overwhelmed at one time, says of the two more especially calculated to stir up opinion against him, those which accused him of *libertinism* and *Atheism* :—

"A calm inquirer might, perhaps, have suspected that abandoned profligacy is not very compatible with severe study, and that an author is seldom loose in his life, even if he be licentious in his writings. A calm inquirer might, perhaps, have been of opinion that a solitary sage may be the antagonist of a priesthood without absolutely denying the existence of a God; but there never are calm inquirers. The world, on every subject, however unequally, is divided into parties; and even in the case of Herbert (Lord Byron) and his writings, those who admired his genius and the generosity of his soul were not content with advocating, principally out of pique to his adversaries, his extreme opinions on every subject—moral, political, and religious. Besides, it must be confessed, there was another circumstance almost as fatal to Herbert's character in England as his loose and heretical opinions. The travelling English, during their visits to Geneva, found out that their countryman solaced or enlivened his solitude by unhallowed ties. It is a habit to which very young men, who are separated from or deserted by their wives, occasionally have recourse. Wrong, no doubt, as most things are, but, it is to be hoped, venial; at least in the case of any man who is not also an atheist. This unfortunate mistress of Herbert was magnified into a *seraglio;* extraordinary tales of the voluptuous life of one who generally *at his studies*

outwatched the stars, were rife in English society; and

'Hoary Marquises and stripling Dukes,'

who were either *protecting opera dancers*, or, still worse, *making love to their neighbours' wives*, either looked grave when the name of Herbert (Lord Byron) was mentioned in female society, or affectedly confused, as if they could a tale unfold, if they were not convinced, that the sense of propriety among all present was infinitely superior to their sense of curiosity."

In addition to all the proofs given by the varied uses Lord Byron made of his intellect we must not omit those furnished by the state of his heart. If, too readily yielding at Venice to momentary and fleeting attractions, Lord Byron had been led to squander the powers of youth, to wish to extinguish his senses in order to open out a more vast horizon to his intelligence; if, thus mistaking the means, he had, nevertheless, weakened, enervated, degraded himself, would not his heart have been the first victim sacrificed on the altar of light pleasures?

But, on the contrary, this heart which he had never succeeded in lulling into more than a slumber, when the hour of awakening came, held dominion by its own natural energy over the proud aspirations of his intelligence, and found both his youth and faculty of loving unweakened, and that he had a love capable of every sacrifice, a love as fresh as in his very springtide.

Are such metamorphoses possible to withered souls? Moralists have never met with a like phenomenon. On the contrary, they certify that in hearts

withered by the enjoyments of sense all generous feelings, all noble aspirations become extinct.

If Lord Byron's anti-sensuality were not sufficiently proved by his actions, words, writings, and by the undeniable testimony of those who knew him, it might still be abundantly proved by his habits of life, and all his tastes; to begin with his sobriety, which really was wonderful. So much so, that if the proverb, *Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are*, be true, and founded on psychological observation, one must admit that Lord Byron was almost an immaterial being.

His fine health, his strong and vigorous constitution, lead to the presumption that, at least in childhood and during his boyish days, his rule of life could not have differed from that of the class to which he belonged. Nevertheless, his sobriety was remarkable even in early youth; at eighteen he went with a friend, Mr. Pigott, to Tunbridge Wells, and this gentleman says, "We retired to our own rooms directly after dinner, for Byron did not care for drinking any more than myself."

But this natural sobriety became soon after the sobriety of an anchorite, which lasted more or less all his life, and was a perfect phenomenon. Not that he was insensible to the pleasures of good living, and still less did he act from any vanity (as has been said by some incapable of sacrificing the bodily appetites to the soul); his conduct proceeded from the desire and resolution of making *matter* subservient to the *spirit*.

His rule of life was already in full force when he left England for the first time. Mr. Galt, whom chance associated with Lord Byron on board the same vessel

bound from Gibraltar to Malta, affirms that Lord Byron, during the whole voyage, seldom tasted wine; and that, when he did occasionally take some, it was never more than half a glass mixed with water. He ate but little, and never any meat; only bread and vegetables. He made me think of the ghoul taking rice with a needle."

On board 'La Salsette,' returning from Constantinople, he himself wrote to his friend and preceptor Drury, that the gnats which devoured the *delicate body* of Hobhouse had not much effect on him, because he lived in a *more sober manner.*

As to his mode of living during his two years' absence from England we can say nothing, except that he lived in climates where sobriety is the rule, and that his letters express profound disgust at the complaints, exacting tone, and effeminate tastes of his servants, and his own preference for a monastic mode of life, and very probably also for monastic diet. The testimony to his extraordinary sobriety becomes unanimous as soon as he returns home.

Dallas, who saw him immediately on his landing in 1811, writes:—

"Lord Byron has adopted a mode of diet that any one else would have called dying of hunger, and to which several persons even attributed his lowness of spirits. He lived simply on small sea-biscuits, very thin; only eating two of these, and often but one, a day, with one cup of *green tea*, which he generally drank at one in the afternoon. He assured me, that was all the nourishment he took during the twenty-four hours, and that, so far from this régime affecting

his spirits, it made him feel lighter and more lively; and, in short, gave him *greater command over himself in all respects. This great abstinence is almost incredible. . . . . He thought great eaters were generally prone to anger, and stupid.*" *

It was about this time that he made the personal acquaintance of Moore at a dinner given by Rogers for the purpose of bringing them together and of reconciling them.

"As none of us," says Moore, "knew about his singular régime, our host was not a little embarrassed on discovering, that there was nothing on the table which his noble guest could eat or drink. Lord Byron did not touch meat, fish, or wine; and as to the biscuits and soda-water he asked for, there were, unfortunately, none in the house. He declared he was equally pleased with potatoes and vinegar, and on this meagre pittance he succeeded in making an agreeable dinner." †

About the same time, being questioned by one of his friends, who liked good living, as to what sort of table they had at the Alfred Club, to which he belonged, "It is not worth much," answered Lord Byron. "I speak from hearsay; for what does cookery signify to a vegetable-eater? But there are books and quiet; so, for what I care, they may serve up their dishes as they like."

"Frequently," says Moore again, "during the first part of our acquaintance we dined together alone, either at St. Alban's, or at his old asylum, Stevens'. Although occasionally he consented to take a little Bordeaux, he *always held to his system of ab-*

*Dallas, 171. † Moore, 315.

staining from meat. He seemed truly persuaded that animal food must have some particular influence on character. And I remember one day being seated opposite to him, engaged in eating a beefsteak with good appetite, that, after having looked at me attentively for several seconds, he said, gravely, 'Moore, does not this eating beefsteaks make you ferocious?'

"Among the numerous hours we passed together this spring, I remember particularly his extreme gaiety one evening on returning from a soirée, when, after having accompanied Rogers home, Lord Byron —who, according to his frequent custom, had not dined the last two days—feeling his appetite no longer governable, asked for something to eat. Our repast, at his choice, consisted only of bread and cheese; but I have rarely made a gayer meal in my life."

In 1814 he relaxed his diet a little, so far as to eat fish now and then; but he considered this an excessive indulgence. "I have made a regular dinner for the first time since Sunday," he writes in his journal. "Every other day tea and six dry biscuits. This dinner makes me heavy, stupid, gives me horrible dreams (nevertheless, it only consisted of a pint of Bucellas and fish; I do not touch meat, and take but little vegetable). I wish I were in the country for exercise, instead of refreshing myself with abstinence. *I am not afraid of a slight addition of flesh; my bones can well support that! but the worst of it is, that the devil arrives with plumpness, and I must drive him away through hunger!* I DO NOT WISH TO BE THE SLAVE OF

MY APPETITE. If I fall, my heart at least shall herald the race." *

Except the last phrase, which is more worldly or more human, might not one fancy oneself listening to the confession or soliloquy of some Christian philosopher of the fourth century: one of those who sought the Theban deserts to measure their strength of soul and body in desperate struggles with Nature; the confession of a Hilarion or a Jerome, rather than that of a young man of twenty-three, brought up amid the conveniences and luxuries surrounding the aristocracy of the most aristocratic country in the world, where material comfort is best appreciated?

Thus it was, nevertheless, that Lord Byron practised epicureanism with regard to his food, making very rare exceptions when he consented to dine out.

If time, change of circumstances, and climate, caused some slight modifications in his manner of living, his mode of life did not vary. At Venice, Ravenna, and Genoa, this epicurean would never suffer meat on his table; and he only made some rare exceptions, to avoid too much singularity, at Pisa, where he invited some friends to dinner. Count Gamba, after having spoken of the sobriety of his regimen on board the vessel that took him to Greece, the Ionian Islands, and finally to Missolonghi, says, "He ate nothing but vegetables and fish, and drank only water. Our fear was," says he, "lest this excessive abstinence should be injurious to his health!"

* Moore, first vol.

Alas! we know that it was. It is certain that this debilitating régime, joined to such strong moral impressions, too strongly felt, undermined Lord Byron's fine constitution, which had only resisted so long through its extreme vigour and the rare purity of his blood.

The bodily exercise he took had the same object, and further added to the injurious effect of his obstinate fasts. "I have not left my room these four days past," he writes in his memorandum, April, 1814, at a moment when his heart was agitated by a passion; "but I have been fencing with Jackson an hour a day by way of exercise, *so as to get matter under, and give sway to the ethereal part of my nature.* The more I fatigue myself, the better my mind is for the rest of the day; and then my evenings acquire that calm, that prostration and languor, that are such a happiness to me. To-day I fenced for an hour, wrote an ode to Napoleon Buonaparte, copied it out, ate six biscuits, drank four bottles of soda-water, read the rest of the time, and then gave a load of advice to poor H—— about his mistress, who torments him intolerably, enough to make him consumptive. Ah! to be sure, it suits me well to be giving lessons to ———; it is true they are thrown to the winds." *

This desire of giving mind dominion over matter is shown equally in all his tastes, all his preferences. Beauty in art consisted wholly for him in the expression of heart and soul. He had a horror of realism in art; the Flemish school inspired him with a sort of nausea. Certain material points of beauty in women, that are generally admired, had no beauty for him.

* Moore, 315.

The music he liked, and of which he never grew tired, was not brilliant or difficult, but simple; that which awakens the most delicate sentiments of the soul, which brings tears to the eye.

"I have known few persons," says Moore, "more alive than he to the charms of simple music; and I have often seen tears in his eyes when listening to the Irish Melodies. Among those that caused him these emotions was the one beginning—

"When first I met thee, warm and young."

The words of this melody, besides the moral sentiment they express, also admit a political meaning. Lord Byron rejected this meaning, and delivered his soul over, with the liveliest emotion, to the more natural sentiment conveyed in the song."

"Only the fear of seeming to affect sensibility could have restrained my tears," he said once, on hearing Mrs. D—— sing

"Could'st thou look."

"Very often," said Mme. G——, "I have seen him with tears in his eyes when I was playing favourite airs to him on the piano, of which he never got tired." *

Stendall also speaks of Lord Byron's emotion while listening to a piece of music by Mayer at Milan, and says that if he lived a hundred years he could never forget the divine expression of his physiognomy while thus engaged.

At most, Lord Byron could only admire for a moment material beauty without expression in women;

* See 'Life in Italy.'

it might give rise to sensations, but could never inspire him with the slightest sentiment.

We have said enough of the female characters he created: sweet incarnations of the most amiable qualities of heart and soul. Let us add here, that although greatly alive to beauty of form, he could not believe in a fine woman's delicate feeling, unless her beauty were accompanied by expression denoting her qualities of heart and mind. Beauty of form, of feature, and of colour were nothing to him, if a woman had not also beauty of expression; if he could not see, he said, beauty of soul in her eyes. "Beauty and goodness have always been associated in my idea," said he, at Genoa, to the Countess B——, "for in my experience I have generally seen them go together. What constitutes true beauty for me," added he, "is the soul looking through the eyes. Sometimes women that were called beautiful have been pointed out to me that could never in the least have excited my feelings, because they wanted physiognomy, or expression, which is the same thing; whilst others, scarcely noticed, quite struck and attracted me by their expression of face."

He admired Lady C—— very much, because, he said, her beauty expressed purity, peace, dreaminess, giving the idea that she had never inspired or experienced aught but holy emotions. He once thought of marrying another young lady, because she excited the same feelings. All the women who more or less interested him in England were remarkable for their intellect or their education, including her whom he selected for his companion through life. Only, with regard to her, he trusted too much to reputation and

appearance; he saw what she had, not what was wanting. She was in great part the cause of his deadly antipathy to regular "blue stockings;" but that did not change the necessity of intellect for exciting his interest. It only required, he said, for the *dress to hide the colour of the stockings.* The name he gave to his natural daughter belonged to a Venetian lady, whose cleverness he admired, and with whom his acquaintance consisted in a mere exchange of thought. Often he has been heard to say that he could never have loved a silly woman, however beautiful; nor yet a vulgar woman, whether the defect were the result of birth, or education, or tastes. He felt no attraction for that style of women since called "fast." Even among the light characters whose acquaintance he permitted to himself at Venice, he avoided those who were too bold. There lived then at Venice Mme. V——, a perfect siren. All Venice was at her feet; Lord Byron would not know her, and at Bologna he refused to make acquaintance with a person of still higher rank, Countess M——, who was both charming and estimable, but who had the fault in his eyes of attracting too much general admiration. Her air of modesty and reserve was what principally drew him towards Miss Milbank. At Ferrara, where he met Countess Mosti and thought her most delightful, he did not feel the same sympathy for her sister, who was, however, much more brilliant, and whose singing excited the admiration of every one.

In order to be truly loved by Lord Byron, it was requisite for a woman to live in a sort of illusive atmosphere for him, to appear somewhat like an immaterial being, not subject to vulgar corporeal

necessities. Thence arose his antipathy (considered so singular) to see the woman he loved eat. In short, spiritual and manly in his habits, he was equally so with his person.

It sufficed to see his face, upon which there reigned such gentleness allied to so much dignity; and his look, never to be forgotten; and the unrivalled mouth, which seemed incapable of lending itself to any material use; a simple glance enabled one to understand that this privileged being was endowed with all noble passions, joined to an instinctive horror of all that is low and vulgar in human nature. "His beauty was quite independent of his dress," said Lady Blessington.

If, then, his nails were roseate as the shells of the ocean (according to her expression); if his complexion was transparent; his teeth like pearls; his hair glossy and curling; he had only to thank Providence for having lavished on him and preserved to him so many free gifts. But it is not easy to persuade others of such remarkable exceptions to the general rule. Those who do not possess the same advantages are incredulous; and, indeed, there were not wanting persons to deny, at least in part, that he had them.

Soon after his death an account of him was published in the 'London Magazine,' containing some truths mixed up with a heap of calumnies. Amongst other things, it was said "that Lord Byron constantly wore gloves." To which Count Pietro Gamba replied, "*That is not true;* Lord Byron wore them less than any other man of his standing."

Another declared that his fingers were loaded

with rings; he only wore one, which was a token of affection. In his rooms hardly ordinary comforts could be found. He was not one to carry about with him the habits of his own country. Indeed, his habits consisted in having none. During his travels, the most difficult to please were his valet and other servants. "On his last journey," says Count Gamba, "he passed six days without undressing."

His sole self-indulgence consisted in frequent bathing; for his only craving was for extreme cleanliness. But, just as the disciples of Epicurus would never have adopted his regimen, so would they equally have refused to imitate this last enjoyment; which was a little too manly for them, for his baths were mostly taken on Ocean's back; struggling against the stormy wave, and that in all seasons, up to mid-December. Such was the fastidious delicacy of this epicurean! *

But to acknowledge all these things, or even anything extraordinarily good in the author of 'Don Juan,' the 'Age of Bronze,' the 'Vision;' in a son so *wanting in respect* for the weaknesses of his mother country; in a poet that had dared to chastise powerful enemies, and the limit of whose audacity was not even yet known, for his death had just condemned, through revelations and imprudent biographies, many persons and things to a sorry kind of immortality; to praise him, declare him guiltless, do him justice, —truly that would have been asking too much from England at that time. England has since made great

* "He was more a mental being, if I may use this phrase," said Captain Parry, who knew him at Missolonghi, "than any one I ever saw; he lived on thoughts more than on food."

strides in the path of generous toleration and even towards justice to Lord Byron. For vain is calumny after a time: truth destroys calumny by evoking facts. These form a clear atmosphere, wherein truth becomes luminous, as the sun in its atmosphere: for facts give birth to truth and are mortal to calumny.

END OF VOL. I.

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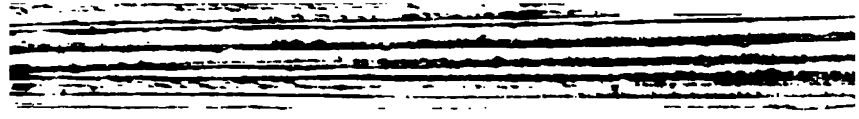

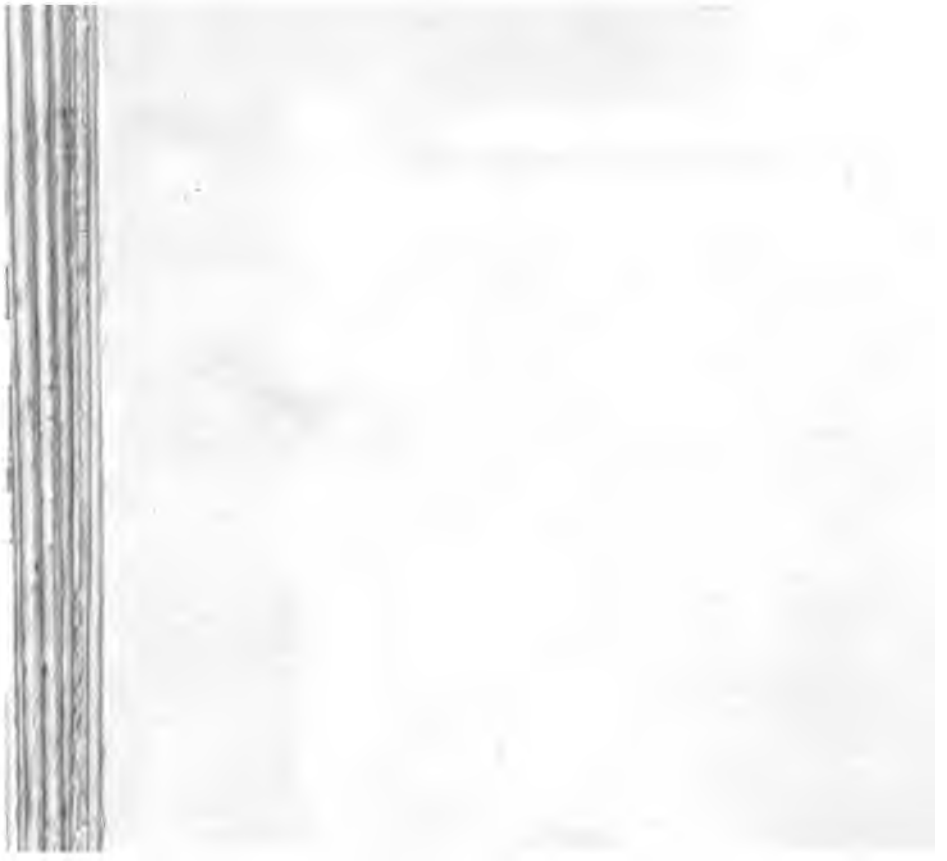

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